Wm. R. Thayer.
March 25, 1920.

John S. Sargent 1920

THE LETTERS OF WILLIAM ROSCOE THAYER

Edited by

CHARLES D. HAZEN

$5.00

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Charles Downer Hazen

In his many associations as editor, author, and university official, William Roscoe Thayer was a participant in correspondence of extraordinary range and quality, resulting from a great number of interesting contacts both in this country and abroad.

The selections that Professor Hazen has made are from a great volume of material and reflect in a marvelously illuminating fashion the European and American world of the three decades closing with Mr. Thayer's death in 1923. Among the most interesting are those which resulted from Mr. Thayer's historical writings, 'The Life and Times of Cavour,' 'The Life and Letters of John Hay,' and his biography of 'Theodore Roosevelt.'

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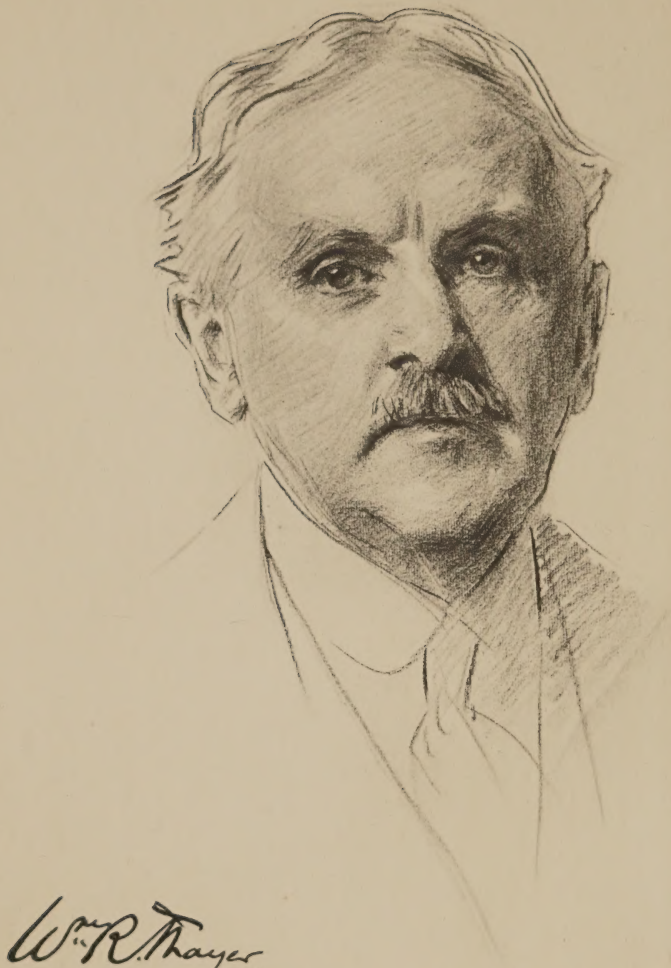
THE LETTERS OF
WILLIAM ROSCOE THAYER



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EDITED BY
CHARLES DOWNER HAZEN

With Illustrations

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PREFACE

The biography of a scholar offers little that is dramatic or sensational in the eyes of the world. His joys and sorrows, his trials and triumphs are known to him alone, are wrapped in the obscurity of a life generally very private, cloistered, remote from the gaze of the world. The slow and silent fashioning of personality, the long labors of self-discipline, the painful travail of the spirit, the researches, often vain and negative and always exacting and exhausting, the pursuit of the elusive fact, a pursuit often futile and forlorn, the planning and the changing of plans, the drafting and redrafting, the painting and retouching, all these processes, the essential features of the scholar's life, the mass of men pass heedlessly by, perhaps not even suspecting their existence, certainly indifferent and incurious.

Yet they are the very heart of the matter. They alone determine the scholar's product — his achievement. They alone explain. And for any one who cares to know how the world's literature of knowledge and of power came into existence they are of absorbing and immediate concern. They are the 'events' of a life that to the world seems uneventful. To the seeing eye the records of the dynasty of scholars are as full of meaning, of suggestion, of stimulus and animation, and sometimes of the great and the heroic, as are the records of those dynasties of warriors and statesmen that figure so largely in the pages of history. Indeed, the intellectual and spiritual adventures, campaigns, and conquests of men are perhaps the more interesting, be-

cause more complex, more subtle in their processes, as well as more enduring in their results.

William Roscoe Thayer belonged to this latter dynasty. He was a scholar and a man of letters. As such he will be judged, his work appreciated, by those competent to judge, by those able to appreciate. An author's true memorial lies in the books he has written, in the product of his pen. They are the witnesses to his learning, his wisdom, his art. They reveal his powers, his message, his ideals. They carry the impress of his mind and character. But they do not necessarily reveal his personality in its entirety; they do not relate the story of the life that produced them; they are autobiographic only in a measure. In the degree that we value them, we wish to know more about how they came to be than they themselves will ever tell us; we wish to know more about the man behind them.

Here the author's correspondence, if it is at all full and faithful, will greatly help us. In the case of Thayer it was both, and will therefore serve to fill in, to supplement and complete what must otherwise remain a shadowy and broken outline.

The letters published in this volume, collected by Mrs. Thayer and entrusted to me without reservation or restriction, but with many helpful suggestions, constitute but a part of a correspondence of half a century. Many of Mr. Thayer's letters have not been preserved, and, therefore, as he wrote in long-hand and kept no copies, their loss is irremediable. And some of those which have been preserved have not been available, or have been available only in part. Of the letters which have been placed at my disposal, many have been omitted, for one reason or another, from this collection, and parts of those which are now printed have been excised, either because

of slight interest to the public or because too personal in character. All such excisions, however, are indicated by dots. I am alone responsible for them.

There has been no attempt in this book to enter the field of literary or historical criticism. It has been no part of my purpose to present an estimate of the man or his work. I have tried merely to select and arrange his correspondence so that, with the notes which I have added, it will recount the story of his life, in its essential course and features. Now and then the material becomes scant or fragmentary and the record lacks the fullness one would like. But, on the whole, the letters are numerous enough and frank enough to reveal with sufficient detail the personality of the scholar, the author, the citizen, and the friend who wrote them. Only a minimum of comment or explanation has seemed necessary or desirable. That minimum only has been given.

C. D. H.

New York, *October* 1, 1926

CONTENTS

I.	The Early Years. 1859–1881	1
II.	Journalism, Study, Travel. 1881–1887	23
III.	Letters to his Sister Mabel. 1887–1893	49
IV.	A Period of Ill Health. 1893–1904	83
V.	The Writing of 'Cavour.' 1905–1911	135
VI.	An Interlude. 1911–1914	188
VII.	The Life and Letters of John Hay. 1914–1915	228
VIII.	The War. 1916–1917	268
IX.	The Closing Year of the War. 1918	314
X.	A Life of Roosevelt. 1919	356
XI.	The Closing Years. 1920–1923	382
Index		421

ILLUSTRATIONS

William Roscoe Thayer *Frontispiece*
From a charcoal drawing by John Singer Sargent, 1920

William Roscoe Thayer, 1863 6

Hasty Pudding Club Performance of 'Robert Macaire,' June 22, 1880: W. R. Thayer and Carleton Sprague 16

The Thayer House at Waverley 24
From a water-color sketch

William Roscoe Thayer, 1892 78

Staff of The Crimson, 1880 190

Staff of The Lampoon, 1881 288

William Roscoe Thayer, 1919 384

W. R. Thayer in his Library, January, 1921 402

THE LETTERS OF WILLIAM ROSCOE THAYER

CHAPTER I

THE EARLY YEARS

1859–1881

William Roscoe Thayer, the author of this book, seems never to have written any of those biographical sketches of ancestors or relatives, any of those personal reminiscences of childhood and youth with which men of letters have so often charmed and enlightened their world of readers. He never attempted to picture the society into which he was born and which played upon him in his early years. This lifelong student of the lives of others, this impassioned devotee of the art of biography, concerning which he once wrote an admirable little treatise[1] which contained the essence and the aroma of long experience and reflection, never thought to write about himself, or to tell any would-be biographer the record that lay behind him, in his family history, in his early surroundings and associations. Indeed it seems never to have occurred to him that such details would ever be of interest to others.

Perhaps an explanation of this indifference, of this paucity of material from the authorized fountain head, is to be found in one of the opening paragraphs of the little book on *The Art of Biography* to which reference has just been

[1] *The Art of Biography* (1920).

made: 'Consider for a moment how arrogant it seems that any man should have his likeness preserved, his deeds, his thoughts, his passions! In the face of Infinity and of Eternity, what is he, but a speck? Is any particular bubble on the ever-flowing stream of Nile or Amazon — an iridescent beam at one moment, and gone the next — singled out for lasting remembrance? We look up at Sirius tonight, knowing that the dart of light which reveals the great star to us began its journey before our civilization itself began. If we could, would we preserve tonight's Sirian ray rather than tomorrow's?'

Whatever the reason may have been, he whose ambition and delight it was to portray individuals, to define them clearly, to show by sharp and multiple strokes how they came to be what they were, and to do what they did, left his own beginnings unportrayed, unanalyzed.

But now and then, scattered through his correspondence, we run across a reference to some aspect of his inheritance. Thus, in a letter written in 1901 to his English-Italian friend, Countess Martinengo Cesaresco, like himself a biographer of Cavour and an author of numerous Italian studies, Thayer says: 'I thank destiny for making me a native of Massachusetts which, though but a small Commonwealth, has since 1770 surpassed so many Empires, in her contributions to human progress and in her great men, and which has today, in spite of too much foreign mixture, as high an average of citizenship as exists. I had rather live here and die here than anywhere else: but Italy is also my home — not so much a temporal and local home, as the country beyond time, where one roams the immense and majestic past, where art and romance, and beauty and that wonderful religion, so human and consequently so interesting, had their abode, and where

almost every generation since Cato's has some great personage, or more than one, through whom to address us.'

And in a letter to Frederick Allen, of Boston, written in 1919, we are told one or two more things of a fundamental nature:

'Thank you for your note. I had heard of "Coke of Norfolk" [1] and his reference to William Roscoe, but owing to my dim eyesight, I have not read the book. Roscoe, as you know, was a Liverpool banker, who employed his leisure in writing the lives of Lorenzo de Medici and of Leo X. He died in 1831, but before his death, he lost his fortune, and even his Library had to be sold. Irving, in his "Sketch Book," wrote a sympathetic and touching account of it. My father was a shipping merchant of Boston and as a youth he was employed by Enoch Crane & Co., and became a partner. They sent him to Liverpool to look after that end of the business. Later, after their marriage, he and my mother lived in Liverpool and came to know many of the old people there, the Roscoes, the Martineaus, the Jevonses, and others. My father had a particular fondness for the story and memory of William Roscoe, whom he had never met, and for that reason he named me, the youngest child, for him; and he had cut a fine white seal ring with Roscoe's portrait, which he left to me. This is the only connection between me and Roscoe.

'That I took to Italian history was owing to the fact that from the time I was a little boy, my mother told me about Italy, and when I went there at fifteen I felt the infatuation of the land and its people, and, when I came to read about it, of its struggle for independence.

'Excuse the length of this story about a small matter.'

[1] *Coke of Norfolk and His Friends. The Life of Thomas William Coke, First Earl of Leicester.* By A. M. W. Sterling (1908).

Thus by Thayer's own assistance we know his local habitation and his name; and also how the great, absorbing interest of his life came to him. This, and very little more. His letters give us abundant autobiographic details and we shall let them tell his story. But they are the details of his own activities, his thoughts, his emotions and aspirations as life itself unfolded — the natural material for correspondence. They portray the evanescent present, not the immobile and finished past. They furnish an always frank, though sometimes fragmentary, record of his career. They do not furnish its background. This must be briefly sketched in as best it may be.

Thayer's earliest progenitor in this country was Thomas Thayer, born at Kyneton House, Thornbury, Gloucester, in 1584, who came to America in 1634, and settled in Braintree, Massachusetts. He had married in 1616 Margery Wheeler, of Thornbury. We know little about this founder of the American branch of the family, save that his will bears the date June 21, 1664, that he died in 1665 and that his wife died in 1672. William Roscoe was of the ninth generation of this transplanted family whose successive heads bore such authentic colonial names as Ebenezer, Jedediah, Elias. Their places of residence were Braintree, Woburn, Brookline, Boston.

Thayer's grandfather, Elias Bond Thayer, was a commission merchant in Boston, and was born on February 24, 1798. He died September 25, 1861.

Thayer's father was Frederick William Thayer, born February 18, 1823, and married on February 4, 1851, to Maria Wilder Phelps, who was born on August 29, 1828, and who died on September 8, 1882. He was a member of the firm of Thayer, Train and Warren, one of the earlier steamship companies which later became the Warren Line.

He was financially very successful. Mr. Thayer, from what he heard and read, came to entertain a great admiration for William Roscoe, the banker-historian, and when his third son was born, in Boston, January 16, 1859, he was, as already stated, named after him. Mr. Thayer, when quite young, developed consumption and in 1861 was ordered to Madeira, as a favorable place for fighting that disease. He went alone, but after arrival, he rapidly grew worse and in 1862 he started to return home by way of Paris, where Mrs. Thayer met him. They crossed to England and sailed from there, but on the second day out Mr. Thayer died, July 13, 1862, at the age of thirty-nine, and was buried at sea.

Mrs. Thayer was left with five small children, of whom the youngest was William Roscoe, then three years of age. She took up her residence in Waverley, Massachusetts, where she and her sister had inherited from their father a large house, with extensive grounds. A part of this property has now become a park, for on it were the rather famous 'Waverley Oaks.' Here the family lived, off and on, for some years. Mrs. Thayer herself, however, spent much of the time in England at Malvern and other resorts, in the hope of regaining her health. During her absence, her sister, Miss Sarah Phelps, acted in her stead and was a second mother to the children, attending to their education and their general welfare with intelligence and tact and sympathy. William and his sister Edith (later Mrs. Francis C. Welch) attended a small school in the near-by town of Belmont, kept by a Mr. Mack. The older children, Mabel, Fred, and Albert, were sent to other schools. William and Edith spent many of their vacations in Philadelphia with Mr. and Mrs. Gibson Peacock, intimate friends of their aunt, Miss Phelps. The Peacocks

became very fond of the boy and he of them and most of the youthful letters of William were to Mrs. Peacock.

At the age of twelve, he was sent to St. Paul's School, Concord, where he spent three years, from 1871 to 1874. There he gave promise of his future as a writer, winning twice in succession, at a very early age, the English Composition Prize, a competition open to the entire school. Owen Wister, then at St. Paul's, has given the following souvenir of those days: 'Upon a June evening at St. Paul's School in 1874,' says he, 'when William Thayer won the prize for English Composition, I sat near him, and was the first boy to shake his hand after the announcement. The subject was the Character of Hannibal, and Thayer, merely a third-form boy, carried the honors off from fifth and sixth-form competitors for the second time running: he had done it the year before; a very marked case of gift declaring itself early. I watched him while the prize awarder spoke the preliminary words of suspense. As he looked that night, he seemed to me to look thereafter, through college, through the Philadelphia days, after the middle year of grievous ill health, at our Overseers' meetings when his sight was leaving him, and at my last talk with him, broken by illness and sitting in an upstairs room, anointed with honors from his own and foreign lands. A grave face with dark lustrous eyes, dark curling hair (at St. Paul's) and lips somewhat compressed; a face of singular intellectual distinction that just missed being dreamy, just equally missed being belligerent, with something about it that seemed more Italian than American. As he spoke to me from his chair, haltingly, life did not seem to have much changed his countenance, save by adding to it breadth and nobility. He would have sat for a typical portrait of the Scholar Achieved; while on that

William Roscoe Thayer
1863

night at St. Paul's, forty nine years before, as he waited in repressed excitement to hear the English Composition prize awarded, he could have sat for the ideal Scholar of Promise.'[1]

William Thayer's literary interest was thus early indicated. Fond of reading, and reading voraciously and evidently under excellent advice, he seems from boyhood to have been equally fond of trying his hand at authorship. Among his youthful 'scrawls' as he later called them, we find novelettes and lectures, dramas and diaries, addresses and rhymes, with the characteristics one would expect. His youthful letters are more interesting and more revealing, being more spontaneous and more personal. A few of them have been preserved and they foreshadow a little the character, the tone, the tendencies of the coming scholar, critic, author, lover of the arts. It is curious that the earliest of them, written at the age of twelve, contains dramatic criticism and personal appreciation of the leading American actress of that day, Charlotte Cushman, a friend of his mother, and of his aunt, Miss Phelps. What was to be his lifelong interest in the arts thus gained an early and enthusiastic and amusing utterance. That many of his early letters concern books and the pleasures of reading but prefigured a permanent devotion.

To Mrs. Gibson Peacock

WAVERLEY MASS. *May 28th* 1871

MY DEAR MRS. PEACOCK:

You wish to know what I think of Miss Cushman and shall.

Miss Cushman is the finest woman I have ever seen.

[1] Owen Wister, in *The Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, December, 1923, p. 249.

She has the mind of a man, but still has that true gentleness which only a woman can have.

She is the best educated woman I know of — you can ask her questions which would puzzle most men, and yet receive the right answer.

It is supprising what an amount of knowledge she has, and one moment she will be talking of the classics and the next will be conversing upon Theology, or one moment she will be speaking of hard problems in Mathematics and the next will interest you with Agriculture.

She has struggled against what most men would have sunk under, but still would keep up that indomitable spirit which is so characteristic of her.

Not only did she have to support herself but her sisters and mother.

She was not like Nillson or the poor actresses of today (compared with her) who get $1000 per night and yet do not earn it for what they earn in a week it took her years to obtain —

She was a true patriot and when in England during the war she stood up for the Union when others feared to.

A perfect Christian, but not like the common Christians, who make a great deal of show on the outside and have none at all inside.

A perfect lady, unpretending (as true ladies always are) in the midst of all the honors heaped upon her. Gentle and kind to all.

I consider her the finest specimen of a true woman that America has ever had, and perhaps the finest woman of modern times with the exception of Mrs. Jameson.

So my dear you have my opinions of Miss Cushman.

I now will proceed to try to thank you and Mr. P. for

(the hundredth time I have had occasion to) the splendid book which you sent by Aunty.

I only wish that I could in the minutest way try to return you gifts.

I have never seen this 'Illustrated Edition of the Lives of George and Robert Stephenson' before and I think it is splendid.

It is Mama's favorite book, as she wishes me to thank you (both) for it also.

Yesterday I went with Professor Shaler and some students to Mt. Wachusett. Our party consisted of 14. I went to Boston in the 6.08 (A.M.) train and took the 8.30 (express) to Fitchburg. Prof. S. and the party got on at Cambridge.

We walked about 15 miles which was very tiresome being a very sandy road.

The Mountain is about 2,440 feet high and very steep. It took us 25 minutes for me to climb it and only 7½ to come down (running) we got 4 quarts of milk at a farm house at the foot of the mountain which was very refreshing. I got home at 7.07 P.M.

Give my love to Mr. P. Miss C. Mrs. de F. and with much for you

I am Yours

W. R. THAYER

To his Mother

S.P.S. [SAINT PAUL'S SCHOOL.]
Nov. 23—1873

DEAREST MAMA:

My week for writing you has come again very quickly. We have had snow here for as much as two weeks — although the coasting has only been good lately. As the win-

ter and cold approach I read a great deal more than in the warmer weather — but of course now that you want to read you experience many drawbacks, such as cold, or a noisy room. I often think of the Athenæum, and sometimes wonder if we will ever be all together again, for scattered as we now are there seems very little prospect of that happy time.

I have lately finished 'Dombey and Son' by Dickens. Isn't it splendid? I think that it is the best of all of his that I have read and I have now only the 'Bleak House' and 'Pickwick Papers' to read. The character of Paul is so lovely and yet so natural; and then the earnest striving of Florence to gain her father's love; with Edith who has a fascination about her, that, although you cannot admire her character, yet you are bound to pity it.

Oh, I would give anything to write like Dickens. I think that he combines immense power of mind, with the most elevated wit, while his pathos is equally remarkable. The only thing that I think might be better in his stories would be not to have so many characters that do not really belong in them. Take for instance Martin Chuzzlewit. His American trip was in some parts extremely humorous, but to me it seemed very tiresome, and so far as the story goes it might be left out altogether, which I think would make it more interesting as you rather loose the connection. . . .

To Mrs. Gibson Peacock

S.P.S. Concord, N.H.
Friday Feb. 27/4

Dearest Mrs. Peacock:

A week ago tonight I was with you, and now it seems months since then. I am very lonesome and wish very often that I was back again at 1425.[1]

[1] 1425 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, where Mrs. Peacock lived.

I would like to be able to thank you enough for all your kindness to me, at all times — but especially this vacation, which I shall ever remember as one of my happiest. You are always doing something to make other people happy and give them pleasure and are so kind. I long for the end of the four months — the length of which, looking forward, seems endless and unbearable.

It may be strange to say that I am lonesome with 170 other boys around me, and yet it is so, for in every face you meet you miss that which you are thinking of, and longing for. I never felt so badly before after coming back to school and Philadelphia and vacation never seemed so far away.

The only study that I have missed in from absence is Greek, and our teacher rushes on so fast that in the end none of the fellows know half what they have been over. I hope that you will all keep well during the next two months especially for they are always very disagreeable up here and probably are in Phila.

I suppose that you will go and see Miss Cushman if she acts next week, and I wish I was going with you.

The boy that I wrote Aunty had run away came back today — his stay having been very short — about 8 hours. I suppose that he missed the hash and fishballs which are unusually free now.

There has been a gold medal offered for something about the Merchant of Venice which I do not yet know — as everyone states it differently. It will be worth trying for anyway, as the study of Shakespeare is always very interesting and useful. . . .

In the fall of 1874 Mrs. Thayer took her family of children abroad, wishing to give them the advantages of

European education and travel. The oldest of them, Mabel, then twenty-two was, indeed, already there, having married a young art student in Paris, John Ross Key, a Southerner, a grandson of the author of 'The Star-Spangled Banner,' in whose family he had lived during his early years. Sailing on the Cunard steamship *Samaria* from Boston on November 21st, Mrs. Thayer and her children reached Liverpool on December 1st. 'At about half past nine this evening,' wrote William in the very solemn, serious diary which he kept of this, his first trip abroad, 'I stepped for the first time on English soil. The night was beautiful, thousands of stars were above us in the sky, while all along the River Mersey hundreds of gas-lights flickered and cast their reflection in the water.' The fifteen-year-old boy's first impressions were that Liverpool was 'a very smoky town — or better — city,' that 'the people have a most distinct, cosmopolitan look which is at once recognizable,' and that the ladies 'dress in the worst possible taste, and are very homely, usually having red faces.' After a few days in London, where he made his first acquaintance with the Parliament Buildings, the British Museum, the Tower and Westminster Abbey, the family went to Paris, where William saw for the first time 'ma petite nièce,' the newly arrived daughter of Mabel. In Paris they remained until June, 1875, William attending school and studying French.

During this winter in Paris Mrs. Thayer received the news that the fortune left her by her husband, and it was a very considerable one, had been lost or embezzled by the trustee and that the latter had committed suicide. This was a most difficult period for the whole family, as for a while all income ceased. From that time on Mrs. Thayer had only the property left her by her father, Abel Phelps.

Thus instead of being in more than comfortable circumstances, she was from now on very much straitened and worried.

The summer of 1875 was spent, partly in Lucerne, partly in Spiez in Switzerland, where William studied German. Leaving Spiez early in October he crossed the St. Gotthard Pass, took a steamer at Locarno on Lake Maggiore and proceeded to Italy, which country, so intimately and so pleasantly to be associated with his entire life he first saw on October 6th. Reaching Milan on the following day this sixteen-year-old boy records having noticed, on his way to the hotel, a statue of Cavour. 'Altogether Milan,' observes the young traveller, 'is a beautiful city, affording an agreeable relief after some of the dirty Swiss towns. The Italian girls and women are, on an average, the handsomest I have seen anywhere. The men too are fine looking, and dress in good taste while their manners are charmingly polite.' Two days later he paid a couple of priests five francs for a sight of the Iron Crown of Lombardy at Monza.

The winter of 1875–76 was passed in Siena, Mrs. Thayer having learned that living was cheaper there than in any place in Italy where good Italian was spoken. William's bulky diary of these days, which is mainly devoted to conscientious and lengthy descriptions of the works of architecture and the other arts which he saw, contains a few more human and personal items, — and only a few. Thus the entry for Thursday, October 28, 1875, is as follows: 'This evening I took my first lesson in dancing. Were I to become a Taglioni or a Grisi, from this day I should date the first outburst of talent — but for myself and ordinary dancers, this event has little of importance. There was something half unreal, however, in going to an Italian

dancing master, accompanied by an Italian servant — and hearing only this language during my first lesson; not to say ridiculous in hopping round and round a room to the tune of a guitar. Nevertheless we learn to dance for the future and the mere thought of waltzes and mazurkas awakens hopes and dreams, which, more than probably, will never be realized.' . . . 'I ought not to forget to mention in this place,' he adds, 'that last Monday the 25th, I took my first lesson in the Italian language,' an event which reminds him of Keats' feelings on first looking into Chapman's 'Homer'; 'and though my fancies may not be so poetical or finely turned as those of the unfortunate Boy-Poet, still I too experienced sentiments of a similar character on this occasion. . . . And thus I stand on the threshold of Italian, such names as Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Manzoni, Alfieri beckoning me forward — inviting me to taste of the many beauties of the "bella lingua Toscana." I pause — looking anxiously into the future, trusting to be able to derive fresh enjoyment as well as instruction, from this study.'

Such being his temperament, progress was naturally satisfactory. William and his sister Edith studied Italian with a Catholic priest, William walking and talking with him every afternoon, and becoming very fond of him.

On April 6, 1876, an item of a different character appears in the diary, indicating a different set of interests: 'Today I finished three articles comprising the History, Monuments and Habits of Siena — being altogether twenty-one pages of closely written foolscap. I am going to send them to Mr. Clarence Key of the New York *Times*, and shall of course look forward with some interest until I hear of their refusal or acceptance. I have often before cast waifs upon the troubled waters of editorial tables, and many of them

have, to confess the truth, sunk altogether.' Later the diarist refers to a tale that he had written four years earlier, called 'The Stiletto,' scene laid in Venice, one hundred and fifty pages long 'and of little merit, I suppose. Naturally a boy of thirteen can hardly produce a work of any value, and I myself, sooner than all others, should condemn it, were I to re-read it now.'

While William and Edith were with their mother in Siena, their brothers Fred and Albert were travelling and studying with a tutor, Robert Alden McLeod, Harvard '69, a Southerner, who had lost his right arm in the Civil War and who had then gone to Harvard College, because in looking over numerous catalogues he had ascertained that Harvard was the most expensive of all colleges and had inferred from that fact that it was the best.

The spring and summer of 1876 were spent at Graz in Austria, where William studied Greek and Latin and continued the study of German, and where, as he once told the editor of these letters, he first learned something of the Italian statesman whose career was destined to be the absorbing preoccupation of many years of his life. Among the tasks assigned him by his Austrian tutor was the preparation of an essay on Cavour. He also continued his independent sallies into creative literature. 'Today,' he notes on June 11, 1876, 'I sent off a short burlesque on Woman's Rights to the Boston *Transcript*, which I fancy may be accepted, especially as I have not asked any money for it'; and a month later he writes in his diary, 'I have finished the longest of my poetical attempts which I shall probably call the Merchant of Aleppo. It seems to me, in many respects, the best thing that I have yet written. The metre is trochaic: 69 stanzas, 414 lines.'

In 1876 Mrs. Thayer returned to America with Fred and

Albert and Edith. William was left in Europe with McLeod. The two spent the winter in Capri, William preparing for college under the instruction of this tutor, a brilliant man for whom his pupil entertained an immense admiration and a great affection. It was during this winter that, at the age of seventeen, William first thought of writing the life of Cavour, a dream that was fulfilled thirty-five years later. A month in Rome, 'the city of the soul' (April, 1877), was 'a never ending delight, an inexpressible pleasure.' As he is about to leave it he writes that 'though I have not drunk of the waters of the fountain of Trevi I still hope to be able to return here often in the future, and give to the greatest city of history, that attention which is its due.'

After an absence from his country of two years and a half he returned home on the Cunard S.S. *Atlas*, landing in Boston on June 19, 1877.

Mrs. Thayer's sister, Miss Sarah Phelps, who had lived much of the time at Waverley and had taken care of the children when Mrs. Thayer was away, was always most generous to them. Among other things she had offered to send all three of the boys to college. Albert did not wish to go, but Fred did, and entered the class of '78. He was destined to make a great name for himself as an athlete. He became captain of the Varsity Ball Team, invented the catcher's mask which is now universally used, and had a place and a large circle of friends waiting for his younger brother when the latter should arrive in Cambridge. William's Freshman year was Fred's Senior year.

William entered Harvard in the fall of 1877. He was a striking figure, in a trying sense. His aunt had given him a complete outfit of clothes made in Italy, clothes that seemed, when they reached Cambridge, very strangely cut,

Hasty Pudding Club Performance of 'Robert Macaire'
June 22, 1880

Robert Macaire: W. R. Thayer. Jacques Strop: C. Sprague

so different were they from those worn by young men in this country. This equipment included also very high-heeled boots. One of the hardest things William ever did in life, the thing that most hurt his pride, was the wearing of this accoutrement. But he would not change and get other clothes because he said that his aunt had spent so much money on them and had been so generous that it would be too selfish to ask for more. Thus he was forced to endure for a time the petty martyrdom which is the lot of every one in America who presents for the contemplation of his fellows any singularities of manner or appearance. But the martyrdom was brief, as his varied personal attractions soon won a place for him in the college community and caused the unhappy clothes to cease to be considered worthy of further remark.

His brother Fred, being an athlete and extremely popular, had, as already stated, a place among athletes waiting for William. But the latter had no talent that fitted him for that academic aristocracy. Not being an athlete, he could not tread that particular flowery path but must walk in the more retired and umbrageous purlieus of literary and social interests. That, however, his walk was pleasant, that he was a popular figure in the class and in the college is sufficiently attested by the clubs to which he belonged, the offices to which he was elected during his student years; the D.K.E., the Institute, the Hasty Pudding, to which he was chosen among the first nine and of which he became president, Alpha Delta Phi, A.D., Med. Fac., O.K., Finance Club, the Philosophical Society. He was treasurer of the Harvard University Nine, member of the Athletic Association, treasurer of the Crew. He was a member of the Harvard Union Debating Society, indeed one of its founders and an associate member of the Glee Club. He

wrote for the *Advocate*, was an editor of the *Crimson*, of which he was also president; became also an editor of *Lampoon* and its president. He was toastmaster at the class supper in his Sophomore year, and again in his Senior year, and class treasurer in his Junior year. He was Third Marshal on Class Day.

His strictly scholastic honors were modest, as it was these extra-curricular activities and his private reading that most absorbed his attention. He did not receive special honors in any subject, but was given Honorable Mention in Italian and Spanish. He did not make Phi Beta Kappa, never having really tried for it. At Commencement he was assigned a disquisition, of the undelivered kind.[1]

The college days were thus full of honors; full of serious study, too, and of useful discipline, for while Thayer's outside activities occupied much of his time and furnished much of the training he received, and while high rank in scholarship was not an absorbing ambition, yet his interest in languages and literatures left an abiding impress and his writing for the college papers, in verse and in prose, revealed a gift, and exercised it. His reputation among his fellows was that of a person of literary talents and promise.

Only a little of his correspondence during this period has been preserved. It is quite impossible from such material to reconstruct his college course. One or two letters to his friend, Mrs. Peacock, written during the last few months before his graduation are of interest and may contribute something to the portrait which it is the object of this book to set forth.

[1] The Class of 1881 graduated 195 members and the College in Thayer's Senior year numbered 828 students.

To Mrs. Gibson Peacock

A.D. Club, Cambridge
April 14, 1881

My dear Mrs. Peacock:

. . . I passed a quiet and rather solitary vacation devoting most of my time to reading and to working up an historical subject on the First Crusade, for a thesis. I am always glad to get back to books after three or four months of more varied work — books, I mean, that are my favorites, and which, while they do not count in college courses, are of great value in giving one higher and juster views of life and literature. I like to browse among them, wandering about with no fixed purpose save that of finding something to delight and probably to instruct. In this way I am continually falling upon new thoughts and new suggestions for research, and I am also, gradually to be sure, extending my acquaintance with the best minds in the different departments of knowledge. So I varied my reading during the holidays, from Hume's Essays and an epitome of Schopenhauer, to Leopardi's poems and Bailey's *Festus*. This last, by the way, is a sadly neglected book, far more remarkable, in my opinion than anything that Keats or Shelley wrote at the same age — twenty to twenty-two. Of course, it has grave defects, notably its lack of connectedness and its prolixity, but it has many beauties to compensate for these, and there are some thoughts and passages that seem to have been cast in the Shakespeare mould. Bailey, I believe, is living still, having survived a popularity that was enormous at one time, by nearly forty years, and after having served as a model for much that is best in Tennyson, Browning and later poets.

Harvard is at present in a stir over the possibility of obtaining Phillips Brooks for chaplain. Dr. Peabody has re-

signed and the place has been offered to Mr. Brooks, who has not yet given his answer. If he leaves Trinity Church, what will the fashionable Episcopalian *religieuses* have to talk about? I suppose the students will then begin to work slippers for him. But, joking aside, he is a fine man, and he would find a large and sympathetic field in Cambridge, for his work. . . .

To Mrs. Gibson Peacock

CAMBRIDGE — *April* 25, 1881

DEAREST MRS. P.:

I have seen him, and have been as much charmed by him as you forewarned me I should be — by him, I of course refer to Salvini. It is needless for me to describe to you all his cordiality, his modesty, and *bonhommie*, during my two hours' visit — they were what I expected, and carried me back to those scenes and persons in Italy, amongst whom I passed so many happy months. I was, you may be sure, more of a listener than a talker, and was delighted to hear him read a paper in which he embodied his ideas of the Shakespearean parts that he plays. He read with all the delicacy, with all the fire and the expression, that characterize him upon the stage. A king might have been proud to have been in my position — but I don't believe there is a king alive who would have appreciated him as much as I did . . .

The following letter refers to an incident in the life of the Thayer family. The old Phelps estate 'The Oaks,' at Waverley, associated with so much of the youth of William Thayer, clashed with the spirit of the age as exemplified in its devotion to railroads. It stood in the way of the Massachusetts Central, then in process of construction, and it suffered from that encounter.

To Mrs. Gibson Peacock

May 21, 1881

DEAREST MRS. P.:

The visit of the jury yesterday was imaginary. All the work of the past ten days in putting the house to rights — Mamma's and Aunty's journey — and the deeply laid schemes of the lawyers, were futile. I went home early and busied myself lighting fires in all the rooms to give an air of comfort and warmth to the house. The ladies put on their best clothes at ten A.M. and sat in elegant leisure as though a deputation from the Grand Mogul was expected. Dust from the Fitchburg Road was carefully allowed to remain on our primeval mahogany and ebony furniture. Everything and everybody — in a word — wore the air of great — though unpretentious wealth. Fifty thousand dollars damages were the least that could have satisfied us at that moment, and no jury who had then looked upon our distinguished, though melancholy features, and at the modest magnificence of our surroundings, would have dared to mention a smaller sum.

That jury — that select jury, was to arrive by a special train at 10.45 A.M.; at 10.50 a train was heard approaching — it consisted of some empty gravel cars — but no jurymen were visible. At 11.40 another train burst into the solemn tranquillity of the place — no jury. At 12 a telegram came — 'Case postponed till October' — no jury. All that posing, all that trouble had been for nothing. An occasional real estate 'expert' walked across the lawn to the extent of $50. Nothing could keep those experts away. They would come — they would expert — they would charge $50. Already four of them have succeeded in walking across that lawn, treading a dollar into their pockets at each step, and if they keep up until October, the Roths-

childs themselves will be unable to pay the damages of the Mass. Central.

The only ground I have for conceiving why the case was postponed is that the counsel for the defense got hold of a Revised Edition of the Bible the sale of which began yesterday, or perhaps they went on a picnic to Chelsea. At any rate, the jury did not come.

Ever yours affectionately *de facto* but not *de jure*

W. R. Thayer

CHAPTER II

JOURNALISM, STUDY, TRAVEL

1881–1887

Now that the college life was over, the sacramental diploma signed, sealed and delivered, Thayer, like the other members of the Class of '81, was obliged to undertake the first experiments in the art of carving out a career. That it should be a literary or semi-literary career seemed to be determined by instinct rather than by much self-questioning or painful reflection. He had written for the college papers all through his course. He would continue to write, now for the papers of the busy world, should any of these care for his services. Journalism offers this advantage to the fledgling — it is easily entered and is easily abandoned. It may be a profession itself or it may be merely a convenient portal through which one may pass to a more permanent calling. Thayer's first contacts with this hospitable vocation are revealed in the following letters to Mrs. Peacock, the first of which was written to her while she was travelling abroad.

To Mrs. Gibson Peacock

WAVERLEY, *July* 16, 1881

. . . In the autumn I intend to go to work. I was introduced to two or three Boston editors a short time ago, and although naturally they were not extravagant in their offers or encouragement to a stranger of whose ability they knew nothing, I hope to be able to get a position at the foot of the ladder on the *Advertiser*. I was told that the best

place for a journalist is the West, and was even informed of a position on a newspaper in Milwaukee. If I have not brains enough to earn a living in the East — where there are fools enough, Heaven knows — I probably should succeed no better in the whiskey and shot-gun country; so I was not flattered by any chances there. I wish to live like a rational being, at least; even if I have less money. I did not pick up a pin in any of the sanctums and hand it to the editor — as the proverbial youth in search of a situation is supposed to do; I left this for a last resource.

I am spending my time in reading and writing — when I am not watching Mamma.[1] I have just finished Talleyrand's Correspondence with Louis XVIII, a remarkably interesting bit of diplomacy, altho' perhaps a little too detailed for the general reader. It shows Talleyrand to have been the nearest approach to a statesman of any of the plenipotentiaries at the Congress of Vienna . . . Just now I have 'Adam Bede,' a play of Calderon, in Spanish, the 'Constitutional History of the U.S.' and Carlyle's 'Mirabeau' on my hands — for I believe in variety, when you settle down for a course of systematic reading. . . .

I am trying to work out on paper a little plot that I have in my head. I have two or three characters that strike me as not unoriginal if I can succeed in drawing them as they appear in my imagination. I don't lay much importance on this juvenile scribbling, as you may know, for itself; but I thoroughly believe in exercising the pen as much as possible, to gain mastery of expression. If I ever attain to this, perhaps I may be able to do something in literature. At any rate, it does no harm, and keeps me occupied.

[1] Mrs. Thayer was ill at this time. She died in the following year, September 8, 1882.

The Thayer House at Waverley

To Mrs. Gibson Peacock

18 Ashburton Pl.
Boston *Decr* 23, 1881

... My journalistic life is neither exciting nor remunerative — but as I believe that an uneventful life is the happiest, and as I have a worthy scorn of filthy lucre, I ought to be satisfied.... Meanwhile I lend *ton* to the Boston *Sunday Budget*, collating for it a weekly column of French notes, another column of general foreign items, and — unless crowded out — a sketch. When my collected works are published, a future generation may be surprised to read the headings of some of these sketches, but, not being a genius, I write on any and all subjects. For instance, one week I described Thanksgiving turkeys as playfully as possible; the next, I pictured the *habitués* of the Public Library; then I described how candy is made, after interviewing a confectioner; and now, I am told to get up something funny about the Boston Common Council. Funny, indeed! I heard them in session last night, and nearly boiled with the heat. The debates were almost inaudible and so stupid that the only 'funny' thing about it all was that they didn't all fall asleep.

But after my regular *Budget* work is done, and it is unfortunately very irregular, I have time to study and read, and I am happy enough to avail myself of it. I have, of course, plans for some proposed works in my head, but whether they will ever take pen and ink expression or not, I know not. The more I read, the more I feel like writing, but then I recall the *best* and my courage fails. It is so easy to dash off anything — so hard to do something worthy of commendation. My especial study at present is Italian history from 1848 to 1870 — an era which forms one of the noblest episodes in the history of any country. I mean to make myself a master of it sooner or later.

I read yesterday in John Moore's Letters describing Italian Society &c published in 1790 rather a good story, which might have happened to several persons I know. An Englishman, who knew nothing of French, learnt a few phrases and pretended to take a great interest in hearing French spoken. He laughed at jokes as if he understood them, and applauded at French plays — after some one else had set the fashion. A friend of his one day at dinner remarked, 'Je trouve ce plum pudding très bon.' The other smiled, laughed, said 'oui' and seemed highly delighted. Another guest asked him to explain the purport of the French remark. 'Oh, I can't,' replied the would-be Galliciste, 'there is something so naïve and idiomatic about his remark that it is untranslatable!' . . .

After a few months of these humble journalistic adventures, Thayer was offered a position on the Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin*, a newspaper owned by Mr. Gibson Peacock, the husband of the lady who was so fond of William as a boy and who was the recipient of so many of his youthful letters. Mr. Peacock was a man of exceptional cultivation, a graduate of Dickinson College, deeply read in the best English literature, familiar with the modern languages, widely travelled both in Europe and America, a connoisseur and discerning critic of music and the drama. He had been the first person of importance to recognize the poetical talent of Sidney Lanier and to befriend the poet at a time when, as Lanier himself said, he was 'as homeless as the ghost of Judas Iscariot.' Under Mr. Peacock's direction literary and artistic matters were treated seriously in the *Bulletin*.

Mrs. Peacock, an excellent linguist, a highly trained musician, with a voice of wonderful range and beauty,

shared the tastes and sympathies of her husband. She was the daughter of the Marquis de la Figanière, Portuguese Minister to the United States, and had a very magnetic personality. All the prominent artists and literary people who came to Philadelphia were entertained by the Peacocks. Theirs was a home where music and literature were highly honored and where the devotees of either or of both were apt to be seen.

Thayer gladly accepted Mr. Peacock's offer of a position on the *Evening Bulletin*. From January, 1882, to September, 1885, he was to be connected with that journal. In going to Philadelphia he was but returning to what had long been a second home to him, where he had passed many happy vacations. It was now, while living with Mr. and Mrs. Peacock, that he saw many interesting and distinguished people. This was the first time that he had ever been thrown intimately with a circle of persons interested in letters and the arts, and he greatly enjoyed the experience, blossoming out intellectually in this congenial and stimulating atmosphere, his by right of every sympathy and aspiration of his nature.

Interested in literature, in music, in painting — his boyish letters are frequently diversified by drawings that are astonishingly lifelike, however technically unimpressive — this young man, of exceptional social gifts, found himself in surroundings that were most agreeable and engaged in tasks which, for a while, at least, were pleasant and useful in the training that they gave. He wrote literary and musical and dramatic criticism, and later, editorials on many topics except politics, concerning which his opinions did not agree with those of the proprietor. His début also as a citizen, of serious and independent convictions, dated from this time. He was a member of the Union League Club,

but he protested against its indorsement of the nomination of Blaine for president.

The following letters to his friend Harrison O. Apthorp, Harvard '79, then a teacher of Greek and Latin at Milton Academy, contain the record of these years, in so far as they have a record. They throw a little light upon the beginnings of the career of the young graduate who was uncertain as to what his purposes and aims should be. They give us glimpses into the inner life, the life of reading and reflection, the formation of character and taste, always so serious a preoccupation with Thayer.

To Harrison O. Apthorp

PHILADELPHIA, *April* 1, 1882

DEAR HARRY —

Your letter has been in my mind for several days, and I've been on the point of answering it, but when I tell you that it's part of the profession of journalism to be continually on the go, with every variety of interruption, you will understand why I have been silent. Journalism, Harry, is very interesting, not nearly so hard as I had expected, and full of chance for learning; besides, you have a feeling that you are keeping up with the times, which is — to me — somewhat consoling.

You would scarcely recognize in my habits now the traces of former laziness. I get up a little after seven; breakfast at half-past, and walk to the office, which is about a mile distant, so as to arrive there at 8. From that time until the afternoon I am busy, first in writing editorials and then in doing whatever turns up. Three days in the week I am occupied until four, and the other three I am lucky enough to get off at 2 — if nothing especial requires my presence. You will see that I have been very fortunate, for

it is not often that a youth of twenty-three gets a chance to write a column of editorials a day on a first class daily paper. One of the editors who had been here fifteen years, left on March 1, and so I was promoted to help fill his place — my salary has also been raised from $7 per week to $60 a month, so that you see, I have every reason to be satisfied and grateful.

I live at Mr. Peacock's. Mrs. P. is, and always has been, as dear to me as an aunt, and I never enjoy myself anywhere more than with them.

I have a free pass to the theatres and get fairly bored by the majority of poor shows that I see. This week there have been two notable exceptions — Patti in *La Traviata* and the performance of Berlioz's *Damnation of Faust* by the New York orchestra and chorus led by Damrosch. Patti is simply marvellous — she uses her voice with such ease and grace, it is so rich, and her acting is so powerful that even in so stupid an opera as *Traviata* she makes the music and part seem fine.

As for Berlioz, I won't attempt to criticize him, lest you should laugh, but I will advise you to hear the *Damnation* the first opportunity you get. The March and Mephisto's solo in the First Part; the Sylph's Dance and that of the Will-o'-the-Wisps; Marguerite's song after she is ruined —

'My heart is heavy
My peace is o'er
I shall find it never
And never more —'

Faust's wail of despair, and the scampering away to Hell — these are points which I know you would not fail to be charmed with. . . .

I was glad to hear of your progress in teaching and hope you will be successful in pounding Greek into the Sixth

Form. Do you also spar? and play the 'cello? and tie yourself up in a knot? Ben [1] wrote me not long ago saying that they had been unwell, but were better now. By the way Carl Sprague [2] is engaged. He gets back from Europe next week. I am going over to New York Saturday to meet and greet him. Of course I have but little news to tell you, outside of my work, and I haven't had much time to read (excepting on subjects pertaining to the paper) so that for the present I will close. Let me see your fist soon again — Semper tuum

W. R. T.

To Harrison O. Apthorp

PHILADELPHIA, *Feb.* 13 1884

Thank you for the information about the books referring to Goethe, which I have been able to purchase here. During the past two months I have been studying Goethe with unusual minuteness. It is my habit when I get interested in a subject to explore it until I am able to form a fair opinion upon it. Goethe's character is especially interesting and remarkable, because it is faithfully reproduced in his letters and works. No author was ever more personal in his writings than he; and the Germans, with true Teutonic love of details, have catalogued everything he did, so that you can almost learn what he ate for dinner each day, when he bought a new pair of shoes, when he overslept etc., etc. The fact that he comes out from this microscopic examination, a truly grand character, proves how worthy he is of study. I have in my head a half-formed plan of writing a series of articles upon him, Napoleon, Cavour, Darwin and Emerson, as the representatives of our century's progress: whether I actually do more than

[1] Benjamin F. Harding, Harvard '79. [2] Carleton Sprague, Harvard '81.

plan or not, the getting better acquainted with these men, and the reflecting upon the typical features of our modern life, are pleasant and improving. . . .

To Harrison O. Apthorp

PHILA. PA. *July* 10, 1884

. . . Yesterday, I corrected the first proof-sheets of my little volume of poems, which I have decided to publish at my own risk.[1]

I confess that to read in cold type thoughts which had been a part of myself, seemed strange, but more melancholy than strange; for how pale in comparison with their vividness to me were those pages! How immeasurably removed are words from emotions — the actual from the expression of it!

I looked up from my proof-sheets at the troops of puffed out rosy clouds, and felt more than ever the difference between the eternal simplicity and beauty of nature, and my poor work. However, it will soon be put to a test, and if it shall be to a few readers either an example, or an encouragement, it will have done its mission. All that I can say is that I believe a desire to tell the truth has inspired it.

So much for the present. We are just now very busy with the Democratic Convention at Chicago, whence, I hope, a good honest candidate for the Presidency will go forth.

These years of residence in Philadelphia were full of profit and of interest. Thayer had his first contacts with the active world of affairs through journalism. He had also time for much reading, which was always almost as neces-

[1] *The Confessions of Hermes, and Other Poems.*

sary for him as breathing. He had leisure for essays in authorship. He wrote articles on such subjects as 'The Pessimism of Leopardi,' 'Cavour's Letters,' 'Matthew Arnold's Poetry,' 'Some New Anecdotes of Heine,' and the magazines accepted them. He heard good music, he saw good acting, he had abundant opportunities for interesting conversations. But as time went by, he became less and less satisfied with journalism and the desire to escape from its 'too facile seductions' grew upon him. His mother died in 1882 and he had henceforth a small assured income of about a thousand dollars a year. He could do as he chose, within the modest limits which his natural inclinations imposed.

Thayer resigned from the Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin* in September, 1885. Before that date he had had an interesting experience which he had described in a letter to Miss Isabella Coolidge,[1] sister of his college classmate and chum, Charles A. Coolidge.

To Miss Isabella Coolidge

Union League, Philadelphia
August 2, 1885

Dear Miss Coolidge:

While the recollection of it is still fresh, I want to give you a description of an hour I spent last week with the most singular personage among American writers. Do you guess whom I mean? Or shall I tell you? — Walt Whitman. The afternoon was hot and bright and as I crossed the Delaware by ferry to Camden and walked along the straight, level streets, I wondered what I should say in explanation of my intrusion, but as soon as I reached the house I lost my perplexity. Even the exterior of Whit-

[1] Later Mrs. William T. Councilman.

man's house, situated at 328 Mickle Street, is simple and friendly enough to dispel formality. The house, or rather cottage, is only two stories high and less than five paces wide. It is of wood, and is shaded by a tree from the sidewalk. The front door was open and when I rang, a comely housekeeper opened an inside summer door, through the slats of which I had already seen her ironing at the end of a corridor. I asked if Mr. Whitman was able to see visitors — he had had a slight sunstroke a few days before — and she said, 'Certainly.' Having seated me in the little parlor — a sort of double-room, the back part of which does service as a chamber, being furnished with a bed, and a few wooden chairs — she disappeared, and presently I heard rumbling as of slow movements overhead. I looked at the things about me — all simple, neat and cosey — and felt half-ashamed to have disturbed the old man. Soon I heard shuffling steps and regular clacking of a stick on the entry floor, and in a moment Whitman moved into sight through the doorway. Very cordial was his handshake, and ere I had made a short apology for interrupting him, his 'Glad to see you' put me quite at ease. He sat in a wicker-bottomed rocking-chair near one window, and I about six feet from him, near the other. I wish I could draw him for you, because if there be today a patriarchal-looking man it is he. His hair and beard are long and very white. His head on the top is oval, or egg-shaped, and a very high forehead stretches down to two bushy eyebrows, in which white and black hairs struggle for prominence. His nose is large, straight and rather fat, with perhaps a Roman tendency, which is buried in the drifts of fleecy hair that cover all the lower parts of his cheeks and face. His eyes are blue, clear and kindly, set in thin almond lids which are so narrow that barely half of each iris is seen. Beneath, the flesh

grows in little folds and wrinkles, which are never deep and stiff like those made by suffering or worry. His skin is rosy and as healthy as a child's. He wore a starched cotton shirt whose broad collar was not fastened at the throat, but was left open, exposing his chest. Trousers, that might have been of homespun, were of his favorite gray color; gray stockings, and worsted-worked slippers completed his dress. His expression has benignity, tranquillity, and contentment. You miss the deep-set eye and the aggressive manner that you associate with men of passionate or profound genius; but you have the embodiment of the kindly, receptive nature, which is placid, observant and interested in whatever person or subject is before it.

We soon fell into an easy conversation, in which he showed no wish to take the lion's share, or to utter wise saws. He spoke deliberately, often waiting for a word or a clause, and without any affectation, so far as I noticed.

He asked me whether I had not written him two years ago in regard to a letter which he had received from Sidney Lanier. I answered yes, surprised at his good memory. He said that he had never replied because when my letter reached him he was ill, but that he had found Lanier's letter and marked it to send to me, but that it got displaced again among his disorderly papers. Lanier, he said, wrote 'a florid, gushing letter,' and Whitman evidently did not put a high value on him.

After awhile we talked about Whitman's own work. I told him frankly that while many parts of his 'Leaves of Grass' had given me pleasure, I did not agree with him as to the propriety of publishing in a volume of poetry certain passages that belong in a handbook of physiology. He listened carefully, and replied: 'You may be right. Many

excellent thinkers hold your opinion. I, however, have always believed the contrary. Now, among the Arabs, if any man should suggest that the absurd custom of veiling the faces of women be abolished, he would be denounced as immoral or as mad. I believe in unveiling. This is the age of *exposé*. Darwinism makes *exposé* in everything necessary. When I think how Darwin was abused before the world came round to his side, I see that it is possible that I may live long enough to behold a similar result in my case. And what makes me hopeful is the fact that of late years there has been an increasing number of pure, fine women, old and young, among my warmest friends. You know when doctors can bring a disease to the surface they are satisfied, but if it remains hidden inside the prospect is very bad. Still, I recognize, there are grave objections. — But my doctor forbade me to get into a critical or fatiguing discussion.'

So I changed the subject, not wishing to induce a stroke of apoplexy, and mentioned that I hoped some time to write a history of the struggle of the Italians for independence. He seemed interested: asked many pertinent questions, about the character of the Italians, the pope — whose influence he thought was slight — and about Dante. He had read the *Divine Comedy* in Carlyle's translation, and in Longfellow's, but he could not quite understand Dante's great position among poets and in the history of Italy. 'But I feel sure,' he said, 'that the trouble lies with me. I haven't got the right clue. If I knew more it would be clear to me.' This was his attitude through all our talk. He made no hasty conclusion, but habitually spoke as if he had not yet sufficient data for arriving at a decisive judgment.

I asked him if among the younger brood of writers he saw

encouraging symptoms. 'I hardly see anybody to tie to,' he answered. 'But there is plenty of time. America knows what she is about. We must first clear up the farm, and put things in order — the rest will come later. I can't help thinking that in the past, too, America knew what she was about. If I were a young man I probably should not go preaching to mankind that they are a good deal better than they've been taught to believe — but as an old man that's my firm belief. In old times the idea was that humanity couldn't be trusted. Perhaps the disparagement acted as a sort of spur to make men do better than they would have done otherwise. Now, however, I put my faith in humanity. Even unconsciously the great bards seem to teach the same truth. America will produce what she needs in good time. We mustn't be too critical. We're critical of the weather, for instance, but at the end of the year the weather has done its proper work. I don't value the poetry in what I have written so much as the teaching: the poetry is only a horse for the other to ride.'

Before I left he promised to send me Lanier's letter as soon as he should find it. I might repeat more that he said — altho' his ideas and not his words remain in my mind, and what I have given rarely represents his actual words — but I have already furnished you a fair report. What I have not furnished is the patriarchal look, the simple manners, the placidity which bespoke the genial character. This old man, partly paralyzed, very poor, lives undisturbed on the edge of a busy world which he watches, and has a fellow-feeling for everybody. I shall long remember him, with his white fleece, pink complexion and friendliness. If he has not taught others wisdom by his disjointed, devertebrated effusions, he has certainly found wisdom for himself. . . .

Having abandoned journalism and longing for the leisure and the opportunity for more intensive study, Thayer returned in the fall of 1885 to Harvard for a year's graduate work in the field of literature and the Fine Arts. It was to prove a memorable year because of the noteworthy character of two of his instructors, Charles Eliot Norton and James Russell Lowell.

Concerning the former, Thayer wrote many years later: 'I remember Professor Norton as the one among all my teachers — in college and out — who influenced me most. When I was an undergraduate at Harvard I had taken his course in Fine Arts without coming to know him, or even divining the culture which he embodied. . . . Evidently I did nothing to attract his attention for my year's mark in Fine Arts was only 68. In his course in Dante's Divina Commedia I seem to have done better, for he gave me 88. . . . After graduating I spent four years on a Philadelphia newspaper and then went back to Cambridge for a graduate year. Professor Norton was the first object of my intellectual quest. I chose two of his courses in Fine Arts, in one of which he covered Ancient Greece and the other Italy through the Renaissance. The course in Fine Arts IV was the most important given in modern days at Harvard. In my memory of Mr. Norton two traits stand out — the urbanity of his manner and the poise of his intellect. . . . Very early in the autumn of my post-graduate year I came to know Mr. Norton personally by asking questions after the lecture, a proceeding regarded with suspicion in an undergraduate.' [1]

The other scholar who made this year memorable for Thayer was James Russell Lowell, who returned to Har-

[1] Article by Thayer on 'The Sage of Shady Hill,' in *The Unpartizan Review*, January, 1921.

vard in 1885 after eight years' absence in the diplomatic service of the United States, as Minister to Spain and as Minister to England. It was, of course, a rare privilege for any student of literary tastes and aspirations to come into contact with one who bore a name so honored in American letters.

Thayer elected Lowell's courses in Dante's *Divine Comedy* and in Cervantes. In the former he was one of eight or ten students, in the latter he was the only one. By the middle of the year Lowell wearied of teaching — it was probably so tame, so full of drudgery after the rich intellectual experiences of the eight years in Europe — and the students were told that he would not continue beyond the half year, and that then Professor Norton would replace him. But a semester with Lowell was a gift of the gods for which one could not be too thankful.

Thayer, writing toward the end of life, had this to say about his two instructors: 'I had had Mr. Norton before, but I was glad to sit under him again, because his teaching of Dante was unapproachable. I shrink from making invidious contrasts. Mr. Lowell unquestionably knew all about Dante that could then be known. In addition to equal knowledge, however, Mr. Norton had a spiritual insight which made his interpretation of the deep and holy passages of the "Divine Comedy" almost a religious exercise. . . . But when it came to reading "Don Quixote" Mr. Lowell was supreme. By a happy chance for me I was his only pupil in this course. . . . We met once a week in the afternoon, and had an hour and a half of monologue. I cannot call it recitation, because it was really an informal talk by Mr. Lowell on all sorts of subjects. He would give out a chapter of the text for me to read over before coming in to him; then he would inquire whether I had found any

obscure passages, and if I had he would quickly throw light on them. After that he would ramble on, passing from Cervantes to Calderon — a master whom he esteemed only a little below the highest, and so on to his own experiences in Madrid and London. As soon as I discovered that by a mere question I could start him off on one of these excursions, I tried it very often. I used to ask him about the English public men of the day, Gladstone, John Morley, Disraeli, Parnell, and he would give very keen descriptions of them. He had many stories which had not been printed and he had shrewd and penetrating opinions on current events. . . . He made "Don Quixote" not only a masterpiece of humor, but a guide to conduct. . . . After the "recitation" was over, he usually walked to Boston, where he was staying with his sister. He could not bear to go back to Elmwood. "It was so lonely, so full of ghosts." He usually asked me to walk with him, which meant a prolonging of his talk. . . . I remember most gladly and gratefully the many hours when he gave me of his best and revealed his own remarkable spirit. At the end of the half year when I bade him good-by and told him that I hoped soon to visit Greece and the Levant, he said: "When you are at Athens, feast your eyes on the mountains with their beautiful shapes, which seem to have been carved by Phidias, and with their indescribable colors."' [1]

One other comment of Thayer's later days on these two rare teachers of his youth may serve to complete the understanding of the personal forces that played upon him in his formative period, influencing his thought and outlook as he stood himself upon the threshold of a life of letters. In a paper read before the Dante Society of Cambridge

[1] Article by Thayer on 'James Russell Lowell as Teacher.' Scribner's Magazine, October, 1920.

after Mr. Norton's death in 1908 Thayer gave the following appreciation of the hours of 'high instruction' which he received during his graduate year at Harvard:

'I call Mr. Norton the foremost Dantist advisedly, for I had the rare privilege of being a pupil both of him and of Lowell, whom Norton himself called his master. But Lowell was never the minute and indefatigable searcher of texts that Norton was; and Lowell never felt Dante as Norton felt him. Lowell's essay will long deserve to be read, not only because it is one of the best literary essays produced in America, but also because in its wit, in its flashes of insight, in its occasional waywardness, and in its Romanticist exuberance, it is characteristic of his brilliant talents. But to read Dante with Mr. Norton was almost an act of worship. There was in his voice something wonderfully stirring and wholly incommunicable. As he reached a favorite passage his face became radiant and his tones more tender. He explained fully from every side, — verbal, textual, literary, spiritual; and even when he did not pause to suggest the parallel between Dante's examples and our modern instances, he left no doubt of their pertinence to ourselves. Yet with all this there was no hint of preaching, no attempt, so common among German expounders, to twist Dante's text to fit a theory.

'Looking back upon those hours of high instruction, I find it hard to say whether the final impression Mr. Norton's illumination of *The Divine Comedy* made upon me concerned the spiritual significance or the supreme beauty of the poem. That one should blend into the other was, after all, what he intended, for he never divorced the spiritual from the beautiful. If he held that those who would render Beauty didactic surely destroy her charm, he knew also the origin and the function of Art-for-Art's-sake

Beauty. In his interpretation of Dante he had one immense advantage which neither Lowell nor any other English-speaking Dantist has possessed: he had a specialist's knowledge of medieval art. So the thirteenth century lived for him not merely in its poetry, theology, and chronicles, but in its paintings and statues, in its churches and town halls, in its palaces and dwellings. These arts, needless to say, had then an extraordinary representative value which they do not possess at all to-day; and only he who knows them intimately can compass the whole circle of the experience and the ideals of that world of which *The Divine Comedy* is the supreme expression in language. Mr. Norton had this erudition, but, as was his wont, he never gave it out as mere erudition; he always vitalized it by his sympathy, and so endued it with immediate human interest. He scorned loose thinking; he despised inaccuracy or misstatement. His critical keenness made him instinctively take care to be sure of his facts, but he unconsciously presented his facts with charm, as Nature hides pollen or seeds in her flowers.' [1]

In June, 1886, Thayer received the degree of Master of Arts from Harvard University. On July 3d of that year he sailed from New York with his intimate friend Harrison Otis Apthorp, Harvard '79, to whom he had, while yet in Philadelphia, made the proposal of a long trip abroad, in the cultural interest of both. Landing at Antwerp the two visited Belgium and Holland, crossed Germany, saw much of Switzerland, visited Milan, Genoa, Pisa, Florence, Rome, Naples, and many smaller places in Italy. In January, 1887, they sailed from Naples to Alexandria, ascended the Nile as far as Cairo, visited Jerusalem and Con-

[1] *Twenty-Eighth Annual Report of the Dante Society.* (Cambridge, Mass.), 1909.

stantinople, spent five weeks in Greece, returned to Italy by way of Corfu, skirted the Adriatic coast to Venice, saw more of Italy, then something of France, and finally sailed for home, having had a wonderful year. 'Cannot state my occupation,' wrote Thayer to the class secretary, at this time. 'With Turkish passport agents I passed as "professor," "ex-journalist," "traveler," "*rentier*," or "observer." Address for next year, Cambridge, Massachusetts.'

Not only for the next year, but for the rest of his life Cambridge was to be his address. He had set his heart on writing, he did not know just what, he did not know how long. But he was resolved, at least to test his fitness for the life of letters which so attracted him.

One of the letters written during this *Wanderjahr* of 1886–1887 was addressed to another college friend, Benjamin F. Harding, Harvard '79, who was studying in Germany at the time.

To Benjamin F. Harding

HOTEL DEUTSCHER KAISER —
MUNICH — BAVARIA
August 12, 1886

DEAR BEN:

. . . We reached here last night and had planned to stop four or five days. But this morning we learnt that Wagner's *Ring der Nibelungen* is to be performed here from the 23rd to the 29th of August, and we have decided, without hesitation, that we would stay to hear it. Such an opportunity might not come to us again in ten years. Therefore, should you write during the next fortnight, address your letter to this hotel. We find, after a month's experience in various places, that we can get on well enough at a cost of from 5 to 6 marks a day, when we are not on the train — fares are, of course, heavier.

I regret that you did not choose Dresden instead of Hanover for your summer abode. It is certainly quite as cheap, and it offers a remarkable chance for cultivation in art and music. We Americans especially, I think, ought to avail ourselves wherever we can, of the chance to study the works of the great masters of sculpture and painting, because at home we are cut off from the possibility of such study. Dresden is also an attractive place — lively, *gemüthlich*, — the tireless Elbe flows through its heart and prevents its life from stagnating. Our regret was that we had to quit it so soon; but Bayreuth was before us. Of the impression *Tristan und Isolde* and *Parsifal* produced on me, I can give no description. *There*, only, have I seen the greatest operatic performances, and listened to the greatest dramatic music, under adequate conditions. Had Wagner discovered only the proper plan for giving opera, he would deserve the gratitude of more than one generation. —

I wish you could have been with us at all our pleasures, and also could have shared my amusement over Harry's disgust at German manners and customs, and his chronic hostility to German beds. This last, by the way, is a subject which you touched on in your letter, and to which I must refer only briefly, so as not to lay myself open to the charge of plagiarism, by borrowing ideas from the following work, soon to appear:

BEDS, BUNS & BEER:

OR

AN AMERICAN IN GERMANY.

CONTAINING

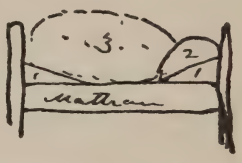
Charts by which the traveller can see at a glance the name, quality and price of beer or bread; the districts in which no sheets or blankets are furnished with feather-bed coverings; the area of toy wash-bowls: a map on which are set down the places where coffee is drinkable, etc., etc., etc.

Preceded by an
INVALUABLE ESSAY
MORPHEUS TRIUMPHANS,
or THE WEDGE REMOVED,

or How I devised means to sleep in any style — no matter how barbaric — of German Bed, with suggestions as to the use of Shawls, and of the only approved method of crawling into the inside of the feather-bed, or puff-bag, covering. With other precious hints, worth many times the cost of the entire book.

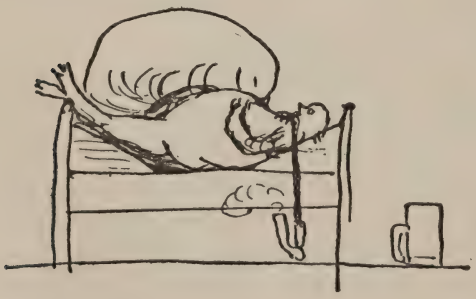
By
HARRI: OTI: ap THORP, A.M.

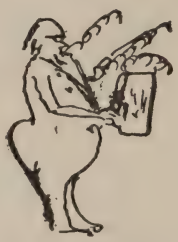
I have had the privilege of hearing some of the advance sheets of this work, and I will not incur the suspicion of disloyalty by divulging any of Mr. ap Thorp's remarkable discoveries. But I can give you the following statement of my opinion upon the question you ask: 'How Germans sleep in such contrivances?' The average German bed is shaped thus:



1. 1. equals wedge
2 " pillow
3 " puffbag.

The approved pattern of the Teutonic physique is this: Put this German to bed and he appears thus:





But it will require only a glance for you to see that

such a bed could never, by any twisting, bring repose or comfort to a man shaped like B. F. H., as follows:

You recognize that it would be as easy to make a square block fit a round hole as to make such a bed fit such a form. . . .

I amused myself in the train speculating upon the origin, or cause, of the dreadful *gutturalness* of the German language, and I submit the following as being worthy to command the attention of your philological acumen:

I Hypothesis: The earliest Germans all suffered from acute catarrh. Catarrh requires constant hawking and throat clearing. This led to the excessive use of the throat as an organ of speech. Q.E.D.

II Hypothesis. The original Germans were tongue-tied, and acquired the habit of indistinct guttural articulation so ineradicably that even the loosening of their tongues did not modify their practice. Q.E.D.

III. The Germans eat incessantly. Whoever talks and eats at the same time must make guttural noises. Q.E.D.

. . . I call upon you to witness that I am the discoverer of these great facts. After some German has brought forth a ten-volume work on the subject, and claims the discovery of them, you must testify in my favor. . . .

Enough nonsense. I wish you were here and could mingle your laughter with ours, but wherever you are, my best wishes accompany you. Learn German, suck what juice you can from these dry pedants, but don't become Germanized. It is our privilege to take the best where we meet it,

and to be thankful that we can pass beyond the reach of the worse conditions that go with it. We can profit by German scholarship without turning into sausage-eaters and knife-wielders; and we can estimate the corporalism of Germany — the ubiquitous uniform, the down-trodden peasantry, the mighty rottenness indicated by the standing army — at their real worth. America has drawbacks too, but not these. . . .

Harry says, 'Tell Ben to answer my letter.' With cordial remembrances for Mrs. H. and the mäd'rl — as these Bavarians say —

A letter of a very different character from the foregoing was one written by Thayer during this, his second trip abroad, to Charles Eliot Norton. His friendship with Mr. Norton, begun, as we have seen, during the year of graduate study, was destined to become intimate, and to constitute one of the most precious experiences of his life.

The letter shows how deeply Thayer was affected by Mr. Norton's example and personality, and how seriously, how intelligently, he sought to use his own opportunities for study and for travel for the purpose of equipping himself for the life of letters, of scholarship and criticism.

To Charles Eliot Norton

Piazzo Sto Spirito, 20, Florence
October 16, 1886

Dear Mr. Norton:

Before I left Cambridge you kindly asked me to write to you, and I do so the more willingly, because it gives me the opportunity of telling you how much of my enjoyment during the past three months I owe to you. Under some aspects, Europe seems to me a huge battlefield, and history the record of the ambition of cruel or crafty soldiers, so that

the reflections called up in me at the sight of Rhine castles and Heidelberg and the Pavian Certosa were not always untinged with abhorrence; but in the picture galleries, before the great works, my pleasure has been unmixed. I do not feel that I know yet more than the alphabet of the new language spoken by Painting and Sculpture; but I can trace unmistakable progress from week to week and from month to month. I found, at first, that I was inclined to see in a painting what you, or Mr. Ruskin, or some other judge had seen in it; needless to say, I do not always succeed, but soon compacted with myself to be strictly honest and to prefer my own genuine impression, crude though it might be. Unless I could verify your reasons, or Ruskin's, they would give me no real strength, but rather make me ridiculous in my own eye. By thus insisting upon stating to myself why I like or dislike any work, the ground is firm as far as I have gone, and it pleases me to observe that my conclusions in many cases resemble those of persons on whose judgment I set a high value, although I may have followed a different path. It did not take long for the Dutch, with their very narrow scope, to satiate me. Men drinking beer at a tavern, or smoking pipes out of a window, or women peeling onions, or scrubbing copper kettles — always the same suggestion — though portrayed to the life, become monotonous, for I demand subjects that interest the heart and brain as well as the stomach, and those careful Dows or Teniers rarely rise above the level of the mouth. And so too of Rubens. After looking at several acres crowded with pagan goddesses and Christian saints, souls damned and souls saved, in all imaginable contortions, what have you seen but Mrs. Rubens the Second, usually naked, endlessly repeated? And at the utmost, what can she suggest to you nobler than the flesh? Helen

of Troy, or Athene herself, could not assume such divers shapes and still retain your admiration; and no fat Dutchwoman, neither beautiful in body nor mind, can succeed where they would fail. But I was astonished at Rubens unrivalled power of seeing figures in motion — evidently a power which cannot be legitimately expressed by Painting —; in this Doré might have equalled him, if Doré had known how to use his palette. You can understand, then, with what different sensations I passed, at Dresden and Munich, into the Venetian and Florentine rooms; in the former I seemed to be among men, dignified and splendid, to whom a gorgeous way of life was not a poetic dream, or an ornament for state occasions, but a fact and daily habit; in the latter, I was surrounded by the ideals which Religion and Beauty had kindled in serious, sensitive souls. I have to thank you for calling my attention to the great value of portraiture; I have already proved for myself the truth of what you said about it, and though I am not yet able to discriminate nicely among the works of the second-rate portrait-painters I feel the excellence of the best — Raphael, Titian, Leonardo and Tintoretto, and, in some cases, Paris Bordone and Paul Veronese, where they too have painted character as well as features. In landscape I am still at the letter A, and see no hope of getting farther, unless when I reach England, Turner enlightens me, or I find help at Venice. A month in Switzerland proved that merely to look on great scenery as an object of curiosity or wonder, without taking into account the relation of Nature to Man, cannot long interest or satisfy. The Matterhorn can inspire only big-eyed astonishment or terror, barren enough sentiments when taken by themselves, uncombined with reasons to explain them, and efforts to overcome: and these, I believe, are to be sought, not in the mountain, but in the soul. . . .

CHAPTER III

LETTERS TO HIS SISTER MABEL

1887–1893

HAVING returned from abroad in June, 1887, Thayer spent the remainder of the summer in Maine. September found him established in Cambridge where he was henceforth to live until his death in 1923. He took lodgings at 15 Ware Street and plunged into work that was congenial and severe. During the next few years he was testing as well as training his powers, feeling his way toward his career. These were his 'prentice years, during which he studied and wrote, read and thought, planned and dreamed with an intensity of energy, a concentration of attention upon the task in hand, that nothing could distract.

It was to be a life of plain living and high thinking. Thayer's income at this time was a very modest one, about twelve hundred dollars a year, his share of the property left by his mother, who had died in 1882. But this was ample for his needs and tastes. Apart from the sheer necessities, the only money he ever spent on himself that could possibly be considered as devoted to luxuries was for books and music and foreign travel — and the trips to Europe were taken on amazingly little. And this modest budget provided generously, as a matter of principle and practice, for the help of others, how generously the following letters will show.

This period of Thayer's life, from his return from Europe until his marriage in 1893, is abundantly set forth in his correspondence with his sister Mabel, Mrs. John R. Key, who was living in Chicago with her husband, an artist of

ability, and her four daughters, Mabel, Beatrice, Edith ('Goblinka') and Pansy ('Marian'). Mrs. Key was six years older than her brother. Not only were the two extremely fond of each other, but their intellectual tastes and sympathies were the same. Thayer's letters to his sister 'Mab' written at this time, present an engaging picture of a serious and winning character and an expanding talent, devoted very simply and very unreservedly to highly useful tasks. One will see among other things how the opening chapters of an intended biography of Cavour, in which the author meant to make clear the complicated background of that great career, developed to such dimensions that in the end he made a separate book of them, *The Dawn of Italian Independence.* One will also see how the claims to poetry, which, from boyhood all through his life, seemed to him far superior to those of any other form of literary endeavor or achievement, were always very present in his thought. Having written a volume of verse, *The Confessions of Hermes* (1884) he was to publish in 1888 yet another, *Hesper,* into the creation of which the letters give us many glimpses, as they do into the author's other activities and aspirations.[1]

To his Sister Mabel

15 Ware St., Cambridge
Sep. 5, 1887

. . . I sent you a postal card the other day to give you my new address. I have found excellent quarters in one of the

[1] 'Verse would seem to have occupied him more than prose during those years of the mid-eighties, and he falls in that class of writers whose reputation rests upon prose works that are the better for their authors having had poetry in them. Scott, Thackeray, Stevenson, Hardy and Howells are other instances of this.' Owen Wister in *The Harvard Graduates' Magazine,* December, 1923, p. 251.

quietest streets of Cambridge — such fine, broad-spreading elms, and such pleasant lawns and places on it! Ware Street runs from Harvard Street, nearly opposite the Carrs' former house, to Broadway, and so is near the College and near two lines of horse-cars. I have a generous-sized study, with windows facing East and South, and a cosey bedroom, while at the end of the entry there's a large bath-room. My meals must be taken elsewhere, and I hope to find a boarding-house soon. So far as I can see, my creature comforts will be admirably satisfied, and after making a very ample estimate for all my extras — books, music, etc. — I shall have two hundred dollars to devote to some good purpose. It has been my plan ever since I had any money to spare to see that a certain proportion of it should go each year to make other people happier, and so long as I live I hope to be able to do this. What I should prefer would be to know that this surplus benefited the children *now*, when a little may be of more account than a great deal could be later. I don't believe in posthumous kindness.

Don't you think that the older girls might profit by special instructions in some branches or courses you plan for them? French, or German or Drawing or Music? I wouldn't neglect dancing-school, either: for girls it is perhaps more important than boys — more from the manners they ought to learn there and the acquaintances they form, than from waltzing itself. Think this over, and help me out of the difficulty, remembering that I tell you the absolute truth when I say that I set aside this sum after having made allowance for all my necessary expenses, and for many selfish luxuries, and for a certain reserve fund to be added to my capital.

Moreover, if you won't use this I must look about for

some stranger or institution whom it may benefit, as I count this among my yearly pleasures. To what end re-investing and heaping up, when *now* a little may do much good?

Suppose I send you $50 every quarter, and you take the burden off my shoulders?

You ask me my plans: how can I tell you them? Suppose you had asked Columbus before his voyage what he expected to discover, what would he have replied? There may be no continent ahead for me to give a name to, but perhaps there is some little island which I can clear and make beautiful and wholesome for those who sail after me to touch at. I have many projects: all that I am sure of is my determination to set forth now, and do what I may.

Suppose I write a drama — full of the tragedy of our modern spiritual life?

Or suppose the great Cavour steps forward from the background of my mind, where he has long been looming up, and says authoritatively: 'Speak of me'?

Or suppose I try to give form to some of the score, or more, of poems which my imagination has begotten during these past years?

Or suppose I set down the experience and reflections of my foreign travel? . . .

Any of these is possible — and there are more projects behind them. If I convince myself that I can do no good by my pen, I may fit myself to lecture in history or belles-lettres.

Of two things be certain — tho' you can give no name to my present tentative process, and tho' you can't estimate by dollars the value of my work today or to-morrow — I shall not be idle, and I shall try to come as

near achieving my ideal as I can. Perhaps my best work may be accomplished in some direction other than those which now open before me. At any rate, I know that only by hard work, by perseverance, by perpetual self-improvement, can such a race be won as I propose to start in: and I know too, that, tho' I never reach the goal, the race of itself is worth running.

What have I to do with money-making, who am already — thanks to others — placed in a position which most men can come to only after hard struggling? Until it seems to be plainly my duty to earn money for the day, I shall try, therefore, to achieve something which may be of more permanent value than dollars and cents.

And yet, Dear Mab, don't imagine that I am overconfident or presumptuous. I know too well how immeasurably inferior I am to the men I emulate to be either. All I say to you, and to myself is — 'That is my dearest wish — I will try.' . . .

To his Sister Mabel

CAMBRIDGE, *Dec.* 25, 1887

DEAR MAB:

. . . Through Pres't Eliot the other day, I was offered the chance of taking the professorship in American History at Cornell next year, for a year: but I declined, first because I do not care to turn aside from my present work to fit myself in that subject, and, chiefly, because if I can get an appointment at Harvard I will not go elsewhere. There is no immediate reason for me to accept a position merely for the sake of the salary it would bring, and every year that I grow after my own fashion will enhance my value hereafter. I have poems, histories, articles in me which will — soon or late — utter themselves, and I see plainly

enough that my best course is so to develop myself that these may be as true and deep as possible. . . .

The other night Harry and I went to hear Josef Hofmann, the ten-year-old pianist. I have often heard of juvenile prodigies, but this is the first I ever saw — a veritable genius, whose native gifts put to shame the laborious work of grown-up talents. He is a slim boy, with a big head: perfectly at ease. He played Beethoven's 1st Concerto to orchestral accompaniment, as nonchalantly as possible, looking at the audience or orchestra quite unconcernedly whilst he played, but never missing a note, and always showing remarkable expression. It was as natural as a bird, which sings from a branch, and looks about it the while. He also improvised on a theme from Cowen's 4th Symphony in a manner, Harry said, which not one of the professional musicians there could have surpassed. He acknowledges applause by ducking his head, and last night, at the regular concert, he was sitting in the balcony, and when the audience applauded a composition by a Boston musician, some one told Hofmann that they were applauding him: so he bowed, and then sat down again most simply. I watched his face, and it was easy to see how sensitive he was to the sound, though he ate candy with true boyish relish — for genius at ten is not yet spoiled, and is charmingly unconventional. If they don't kill him by premature strain he ought to become a really great master of music. When he plays in Chicago, hear him if you can. . . .

In 1888 Thayer was appointed an instructor in the English Department of Harvard College. He served as such for one year only.

To his Sister Mabel

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.: *Oct.* 7, 1888

DEAR MAB:

. . . I have settled into my old routine, and thus far have had nothing to complain of. This week my college work will begin: it consists of correcting about 900 themes during the year. Besides this I am to give occasional informal lectures to the Sophomore Class: three have been set down for delivery before Christmas — on Style, Reading, and Realism. I am to undertake, besides, the supervision of the work in American literature of an advanced student. I look forward to all this eagerly, because I believe that if I can succeed in putting my views as vividly as I feel them, I may be able to help some of the fellows.

I read this week a very interesting autobiography — of Solomon Maimon, a Polish Jew who lived during the latter part of the last century. He suffered extreme hardships, and led a strange, sad, vagrant life; yet in spite of it all, the divine spark of intelligence was not smothered, but lighted him to the production of some of the most remarkable philosophical work of the time. If you have leisure, read the book. It will show you how an intelligent Jew broke away from orthodoxy and emerged upon the open plain of rationalism; it furnishes, besides, an admirable exposition of Jewish theology and customs, and abounds in anecdotes of a social condition almost incredible to our thinking.

I have also finished *The Egoist.* Like too many modern books it is too long, but as a dissection of two typical characters it is most masterly. The tyranny and selfishness of Patterne, the repugnance and desperation of Clara Middleton for him, could not be better portrayed. Now I am at a huge life of Bismarck, with the view of per-

haps writing something on the subject if I succeed in mastering it.[1] . . .

In a much-worn copy of Watts's Metrical version of the Psalms I have come upon the following, written in a firm, stiff hand, with ink now brown; I think it will interest you:

'Leominster May 28th: 1813
the Property of Abel Phelps[2] — a gift to him from his grandfather David Wilder in the Seventy fourth year of his age — this book compos[d] by doctor watts I now do give to you that you may read and understand and think who gave it you.
Abel you are young but if you live you will soon be old — early advice if it is good may be of servis. I your grandfather am in the seventy forth year of my age and must soon pay the debt to nator by dying and as I wish your happyness in this world and that which is to comb my advice to you is that you remember God your Creator who must be your Judge — take care to make Conscience of what you do and strive to serve your God and your generation with faithfullness that when death shall close your eyes you may find your name among the faithfull.' — On the back is written, in boy's hand: 'This is a present from my aged Grandfather whom I very much respect and hope to remember when he is no more.' — Is it not a privilege to be descended from folk so simple and honest? I think we saw David Wilder's grave at Leominster. — Give my love to all the children.

[1] An essay on Bismarck was published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, September, 1898, and was republished in 1899 in *Throne-Makers*.

[2] Thayer's maternal grandfather.

To his Sister Mabel

CAMBRIDGE: *Oct.* 26, 1888

. . . I am busy preparing my first lecture, to begin next Monday. Although the subject is elementary enough and general enough — Reading — I am wrestling with it as if it were an article for a magazine. Indeed, the latter would be easier to write, because it is directed to no special set of readers, while in writing this lecture, I have a concourse of 300 crude sophomores in my mind, and endeavor to express myself so as to stir *them* most effectively.

Coquelin is to lecture at Sanders Theatre next week. I wish you were here to go with me, but you shall have a report of him. — Edith and boy are well. I haven't yet called on Wm. W. That, too, shall be done, as soon as I have shaken off this sophomoric coil. . . .

To his Sister Mabel

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.: *Nov.* 25, 1888

I might make this letter a second edition of the dreary news I had to report last week — but I won't. What's the use of dilating on disagreeable matters? They come; the Past is irrevocable; the only wise, sane course for us in the Present, is to make the best of the new conditions — however perplexing they may be. Victory, I suppose, never appears in life as it does in a battle, a political campaign, where one side wins, the other loses, and that particular issue is decided: whereas in life, victory means a habit, not any particular achievement. All circumstances are subtle tests which Providence employs to search out our character: and success, therefore, is no momentary stroke of good-luck, but the strengthening of character to the degree where it cannot be shaken or terrified by circumstances. . . .

I am busy with *Tristram*, but it's still too early for me to foresee whether I shall succeed in producing a play fit for the dramatic stage or not. At any rate, the subject is most interesting, and every day my imagination is kindled by new possibilities. I hope next week that *Hesper* will come from the binder's and you shall have an early copy.[1] I shall print only 500 copies, and have only half that number bound; but even fewer, I suppose, will supply the small demand I anticipate. . . .

To his Sister Mabel

CAMBRIDGE: *Dec.* 23, 1888

If this reaches you on Christmas morning, let it bring you anew my best wishes for a happy holiday. Indeed, where children are in the household, it is almost impossible for it not to be happy: for the old surprises are ever new to them, and the immortal capacity of youth for merriment and hopefulness are illustrated afresh. The season seems to me to be perhaps the most remarkable single expression of Christ's influence on mankind, and the loveliest of all festivals. For a day, or a few days, at least, society is stimulated up to the point where it leads the more ideal life which, as we hope, may, with the lapse of generations, and the spiritualizing of the race, become the habitual existence of the majority. . . .

I have just finished Ruskin's Autobiography — *Præterita* — very charming, garrulous and rambling, fuller of descriptions of scenery than of his own affairs, yet eminently characteristic. I hope he will have strength to add a volume or more to the two already published. . . .

To be converted, by his sympathy and imagination, into a dozen different persons in as many days, and at times

[1] Printed (1888) by Charles W. Sever, Cambridge, Mass.

hardly to know that he has an individuality of his own — seems to be the blessing — and the curse — of a poet. Not that I arrogate to myself that supreme title — there are rarely more than three or four real poets in any age, and those cannot always be recognized until long after their death: but it is clear that what talents I have belong to the poetic order, tho' as yet I am but tongue-tied and half-articulate. The gift of feeling beauty and sympathizing with the whole circle of passions is the first and indispensable gift: but to this must be joined the faculty of utterance, before one's poetship is established. . . .

To his Sister Mabel

CAMBRIDGE: *Feb.* 3, 1889

. . . I have read recently a life of Wm. Roscoe[1] — I meant to do so long ago — and I am proud and gratified to be named for so worthy a man. He held a high position in letters, and better still, he was busy for more than fifty years on the side of justice against the resistance of the upholders of a social system based on injustice. He was one of the pioneers in England in the struggle for the abolition of the Slave Trade; he battled for political reform a generation before that reform was achieved; he had great influence in introducing a more humane and rational method of dealing with criminals in prisons. He was most upright in business, and set an example of that rare combination of merchant and man-of-culture of which we have had hardly any specimen in America. His bankruptcy, owing to the conclusion of peace after the long Napoleonic wars which from the first he declared to be unworthy

[1] William Roscoe (1753–1831), author of *Lorenzo de Medici* and *The Life and Pontificate of Leo X*, and of many poems, among which *The Butterfly's Ball* has delighted many thousands of English children.

of England, was very pathetic: but in that calamity his bright moral character shone out. His prose, founded on the model of the Johnsonian period which the cultivated men then thought most admirable, seems to us now a little stilted; and his verse, formed on the pattern of Pope's, is doubtless artificial, without having the epigrammatic brilliance of Pope's: but the main and important fact is that Roscoe was a fine man, to be admired and to be emulated.

Of much deeper significance and interest, however, is Matthew Arnold's *Literature and Dogma*, which I finished a few days ago. No wonder you were greatly pleased and helped by it: for it seems to me to clear away many cobwebs, and to set forth the fundamental truth of the Bible in a simple, distinct way, which appeals to the reason of anybody who consents to employ this highest human faculty in these most important matters. Most of the views Mr. Arnold reaches, I had already reached, but not by the same road; but this made it all the more satisfactory, for I have never formulated my conclusions as rationally and clearly as he has done. In reading the book, I remembered advice which I once gave you in regard to the religious training of your children, and I believe more firmly than ever that I was right in telling you to teach them as little as possible of those current doctrines of so-called Christian denominations, because the less they are taught these, the less they will have to unlearn when they grow up. Two thirds of the best energy of our maturity is consumed in this terrible business of unlearning — of getting rid of specious fallacies, of struggling to shake the grip of superstition and error off from our throats so that Reason can breathe freely and healthily. I know from my own experience how grim this battle is. . . .

... Did I recommend to you, by the way, George Meredith's last volume of poetry, *A Reading of Earth?* You will find much of the wholesomest truth, and much genuine poetry in it, if you but succeed in breaking the somewhat hard shell, and in coming to the kernel....

To his Sister Mabel

CAMBRIDGE: *April* 3, 1889

...I have been swimming of late in the delightful stream of Persian Poetry. What clear waters! What a gently-rippling current! And along the bank, gardens of rose-trees, and sweet hyacinths and narcissi, and the never-wearisome plaintive songs of the bulbul! Truly, our familiarity causes us to forget this wonder of wonders — a printed book! Yet no fabled wishing-cap had more magical powers. I open a volume of Hafiz, and in a moment my mind has flown out of Cambridge, over the Atlantic, beyond Europe and the Mediterranean — flown not only beyond *space*, but beyond *time* — and I am present in the rose-bowers of Shiraz, five hundred years ago. The poet sings to me as he sang to his fellows of the supreme preciousness of love, of the fleetingness of life, of the sweetness of a cup of pure wine, brought by the hands of a beautiful maiden. The tunes he sings are old, no doubt, and they have but little variety; but then, they are perennially fresh, because they echo the sentiments of the young in every generation. And if we judged them strictly by the letter, we should have to confess that they exaggerate the capacity of the senses to receive enjoyment: the permanent pleasures of life come not into us from the outside through our lips and our flesh, but the spirit within us goes abroad, and, in proportion as it is beautiful, it perceives beauty in the world and life eternal. And from this very

fact, the songs of Hafiz are susceptible of a spiritual interpretation higher than the literal, just as we may see in a Greek statue of Aphrodite not only a woman perfectly formed, but also a goddess.

I have a notion of translating, or rather of paraphrasing, some of Hafiz's songs, which I read in admirable German versions; they have never been even tolerably given in English. . . .[1]

To his Sister Mabel

CAMBRIDGE: *April* 19, 1889

. . . Von Bülow has given four Beethoven concerts in Boston this week. I attended two, and never heard a pianist that could be compared with him. He plays with the ease of a swallow flying: no grunting and sweating; no writhing and leaping, but fluent, masterly grace. I never heard such delicate modulation of tone, or such infinitesimal distinctions in time. He can touch the keys as lightly as a humming-bird brushes a cluster of honeysuckle or a trumpet-flower; he can split up a second into a hundred parts, and make each note vibrate through the longest or shortest fraction of them. The critics complain that he has no feeling: for my part I don't believe that Beethoven's sonatas are addressed to the surface emotions, so that Von Bülow is correct. He is a rebuke to our musical provincialism. Should he play in Chicago, be sure to hear him.

I am reading Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina:* a better novel than *War and Peace*, but yet far from deserving the exaggerated praise which the Tolstoyans have given it. The man has no sense of proportion. He paints every leaf on his trees. He cannot mention a peasant without telling you

[1] Some of these translations appear in *Poems, Old and New.* Boston, 1894.

the color of his beard, the number of buttons on his jacket, the thickness of the mud on his boots. He describes with equal length and equal minuteness a racehorse in the stable and the most dramatic episode in Anna's swift career. — If you want to know just how all classes of Russians dress, talk, and live, Tolstoy will tell you with photographic minuteness; but this is not the purpose of Art, and I believe that his so-called novels will be referred to in the future by those who wish to know the conditions of Russia under Alexander II, but that they will not be read for their story. He lacks — at least in my opinion — charm — and that is the quality which keeps books fresh. Accuracy and wide knowledge do not alone suffice. . . .

To his Sister Mabel

CAMBRIDGE: *May* 8, 1889

. . . You will be sorry to hear that Prest. Eliot has informed me that my appointment at Harvard will not be renewed next year. He gave no satisfactory reason, and this makes the decision somewhat galling. Of course, the theme-correcting was the merest chore work, and I did not expect to continue at it long, but I hoped that by performing it I might eventually have an opportunity of testing my ability in a more congenial course. As it is, I feel that I have been shut out from Harvard without having had a fair hearing.

What to do next? is the question. I shall probably stay here next year and write, tho' I confess that my failure to receive any encouragement from my past work, and to find editors who will publish much that has accumulated, has led me of late to wonder whether, after all, it is worth while to go on. I know, of course, that almost every man who has made his mark in literature has had to outlive a

long apprenticeship; but the question which confronts me is whether or not I have anything sufficiently valuable to say to the world to justify me in persevering. . . .

. . . And yet, in spite of these doubts my inclination is to go ahead: the goal I aim at is the highest, and worth any endeavor. To retreat to a lower plane without another effort would be unsatisfactory to me. What torments me is the wish to see results: waiting is so hard a test; and it is also hard to mix in the world which wonders what you are doing, and which half-suspects that you are throwing away opportunities. And yet, it all depends upon myself — and so I pray for greater self-reliance and a firmer will: I know that if I can persevere, the fact of having persevered will make my character stronger, whatever the fruits of my labor may be. . . .

To his Sister Mabel

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.: *June* 1, 1889

. . . Since I wrote, a large possibility has loomed up which may alter all my plans. They want a Professor of English Literature at the University of California. The salary is $3000; the work is apparently just what I have been seeking; and I should be at the head instead of at the foot of an important department. Pres^t. Eliot has recommended me to the position, but whether I shall be accepted or not cannot be known for a fortnight. It seemed to me too good a chance to be slighted — much as I dislike moving from the East, and dread plunging into new surroundings. But this very dread impels me to make the trial, for at least a year. If I succeed there, I shall have no trouble in getting a first class place in the East a few years hence. Should I get the appointment, I shall not go abroad, but shall spend the summer preparing for the new

work, partly here, and partly with you at Princeton.[1] Don't delay your coming a day longer than is necessary. I look forward eagerly to the prospect of seeing you and the children a few weeks hence. Let me know when you intend to start. . . .

To his Sister Mabel

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.: *June* 9, 1889

You said nothing in your letter received yesterday about the date of your starting for Princeton. I hope you won't put off later than the 15th, which you set.

I have not had time yet to hear from California — probably no reply will come before Wednesday or Thursday at the quickest — and I am not very sanguine of getting the appointment. But we shall see. I was offered a professorship in a University at Tokio, Japan, but of course declined — that is too far away, and leads nowhither. I have also had a chance to go abroad for two years to take charge of a boy — but that, too, does not lie along my road. . . .

Thayer did not receive the appointment at the University of California, and as a matter of fact his academic career was over after the single year at Harvard as instructor. This was fortunate for him and for the world, although it was not relished at the time. In the summer of 1889 he went abroad for the third time, again with the companion of his trip of 1886-87, Harry Apthorp, visiting Bremen, Berlin, Potsdam, Dresden, Bayreuth, Venice, Turin, Paris and London, collecting by the way material for the projected Cavour. In the fall he was back again in Cambridge, hard at work.

[1] Princeton, Massachusetts, where Mrs. Key spent many of her summers.

To his Sister Mabel

CAMBRIDGE, *Nov.* 12, 1889

Well, well, well! What a time has elapsed since I wrote you — except that brief hasty scribble from the dingy St. Louis!

. . . Let me content you by assuring you that St. Louis is more, much more, of a chimney than Chicago, and so far as I saw — a dirtier place. Certainly it did not give me the impression of grandiosity which I got from my visit to Chicago: its buildings are heterogeneously big and little — no fair average. My! what a monotonous country you have to pass in order to reach the Miss[pi]! As I said to Prof. Shaler, I should be glad to subscribe to an earthquake which should throw up the level states of Ohio and Indiana into some variety pleasing to the eye and stimulating to the mind: as it is, he tells me, the layers lie flat, one above the other no one knows how thick, like the pages of a book lying on a table.

Since my return, I have seen Fred, Edith and Aunt M. — all well. I have cleared off my desk and have begun to concentrate my attention on Cavour: or rather, he appears like a speck on the horizon, so long is the vista thro' which I look at him; for my first difficulty is to decide how long a perspective to take before reaching him. The first five pages will be harder to write than any succeeding fifty — or I am much mistaken: so much depends on the start.

You will be as surprised as I was to know that Aldrich has accepted the Bruno article for *The Atlantic*.[1] I feared that it was too stiff to suit his taste, or that of many of his readers. So the Peddler has sold one of his 'notions.'

I am reading much concerning Italian affairs, and a good

[1] Published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, March, 1890, and republished in *Throne-Makers*, 1899.

deal of it would, I think, interest you, if I had a chance to read it aloud to you. The period begins to live in my imagination, so that I follow the contemporary accounts of revolutions and dictators, and know the chief actors by sight, and connect the diverse events: but it will be several months before I can tell whether I can reduce them into a symmetrical book, or not. If I can have three years of reasonable immunity from the distractions of 'the flesh and the devil' — 'the world' has not as yet proved a formidable enemy, — I may produce a work which you will say was worth doing.

I am very glad to know that you have arranged some of your mornings so that you can have quiet hours at the Library. Of course reading, for which you have comparatively little time, is what you most crave; but believe me when I tell you that your active intercourse with people, and daily care of the children, are also very precious elements in life — elements which I — who have a superfluity of reading — perhaps value all the more highly. At least I see that the ideal life is that in which the balance, between thinking and action is kept level: unfortunately most of us tip too much to one side or to the other. In reading, keep as much as possible to a few first rate books — the names of which every one knows; let other persons cackle all they please about the books of the day, or the week; and don't indulge the too common appetite nowadays of reading criticisms of works, instead of reading the works themselves. But I grow didactic, and will stop. . . .

To his Sister Mabel

CAMBRIDGE, *December* 15, 1889

The most important news of the week is the death of Browning: important to me and to everybody who has

ever had pleasure and strength from his works. I think we cannot be too grateful to those men who have come to us at some time in our life and revealed to us possibilities and duties in ourselves which we never suspected. Far more precious are their visits than those of the inventor who puts an easier way of working in our hands, or of the man of science who comes into our field and points out the possibility of improving the crops or the existence of a coal deposit. Of Browning I think we can say with truth, He leaves none of his readers less manly, less sincere, less vigorous: on the contrary, he infuses these qualities into those who come to know him best. Surely, that is high praise! What a satisfaction to be able to reflect that during your life you had been really helpful to but ten persons: Browning could multiply that by thousands! And he could also know that so long as his works were read at all they would — like water from a medicinal spring — carry inspiration with them. And then how appropriate that he died in Venice, in Italy — the loveliest of lands, which was his chosen home, and which he had done so much to make Englishmen understand. Truly, in a death like his there is 'nothing for tears.' I enclose a sketch from the N.Y. *Post*, which seems to me to be very fair, altho' I should dissent from a few of the opinions.

For a month or two we shall have articles upon him, puffed out with prophecies as to the position he will take with posterity. As if anybody could predict that; and as if the wonderful changes in taste of the past hundred years ought not to scare would-be prophets into silence. How surprised our greatgrandparents would be could they know that Blake — one of the poets they had hardly heard of — would be one of the delights of our time; or that we could laugh and not shudder at the extravagances of the *Castle*

of Otranto, and yawn instead of cry over the fortunes of *Evelina*. Ah, posterity! it's easy enough to say you will like this and forget that — but we shall never be alive to see whether you do what we say you will! Macaulay, *you* (not posterity) may remember, says in his journal that in writing his *History* he had the year 2850 always in view, 'and where,' he asks triumphantly, 'will your Emersons and Carlyles be then?'[1] Sublime self-confidence! After less than 40 of the 1000 years Macaulay looked forward to, the authority of his name is considerably diminished, and the chance is pretty good that Carlyle and Emerson will last at least as long as he. . . .

To his Sister Mabel

CAMBRIDGE, *Jan.* 26, 1890

. . . As I said, my golden eggs have begun to hatch, as follows:

Jan. 18, Article on Tennyson and Browning in the Phila. *American*.

Jan. 23, First part of the article on The Oxford Movement in *The Open Court*.

Yesterday, February *Atlantic*, review of Murdock's book on 'The Reconstruction of Europe.' The next *Atlantic* will have the paper on *Giordano Bruno;* then there are a review on a history of Austria, soon to appear in *The Nation*, and the essay on *Realism*, which the *Unitarian Review* will disclose, in the course of time, to a large and eager public. So you see that my 'side-shows,' when put together, make a small exhibition of their own. Add to these a sketch of Harvard College, which I have promised

[1] Macaulay asked, 'Where will your Emersons be then?' He did not mention Carlyle.

to write between now and June, and which will bring from $100 to $200, according to length.[1]

To conclude this 'shoppy' subject, let me tell you that I have at last found a publisher for the Elizabethan Plays.[2] Ginn & Co., Boston, the largest publishers of school and college books, have accepted my work, and will bring it out, at their own expense, during the Spring. I shall make no money from it, as 2000 copies must be sold before I am paid a royalty, but the important consideration is to have the Plays printed at all.[3] I shall be glad to have done something towards giving Webster's *Duchess of Malfy* a wider hearing. . . .

Edith has just been here, and reports all well at 14 Gloucester St. — I have been reading Metternich's *Memoirs:* very entertaining; but wonderful to think that such a man should have been the pilot of Europe for nearly 40 years. His reminiscences of Napoleon are vivid, and probably veracious. . . .

To his Sister Mabel

CAMBRIDGE, MASS. *Feb.* 23, 1890

I have been very busy and distracted this week — doing what, do you suppose? Playing reporter, editor, proof-reader, and printer's devil. Harvard University has in view the publication of a weekly, official newspaper. It

[1] *An Historical Sketch of Harvard University, from its Foundation to May, 1890.* First published in the *History of Middlesex County.* Reprinted separately in a booklet of 66 pages in Cambridge, Mass., 1891.

[2] *Best Elizabethan Plays.* Boston, 1890. A collection of five Elizabethan plays: *The Jew of Malta, The Alchemist, Philaster, The Two Noble Kinsmen, The Duchess of Malfi.*

'One must suppose that William Thayer had already made his choice for prose before he wrote his preface to his selection of Elizabethan plays in 1890 — a very direct result of his companionship with Horace Furness.' — Owen Wister, in *The Harvard Graduates' Magazine,* December, 1923, p. 251.

[3] Down to the close of 1925, 15,539 copies of this book had been sold.

was desired to prepare a specimen number, in order to convince the Corporation that such a publication is not only feasible, but also that it would be of benefit to the University. I was asked to undertake the preparation: hence my distractions and bothers. Should the Corporation approve, it is probable that I shall be appointed regular editor, with not a large salary — but then, the work would not be sufficient to interfere with my History — which, as I just wrote M. P., is more important than the editing of 40 college papers to me. I anticipate a good deal of adverse criticism, and finical worries at the college printing-press, &c., &c., but the proposition is so good, that I deemed it wise to accept the offer — at least for the remainder of this term. The regular publication — provided the Corporation sanctions it — will begin about April 1....

To his Sister Mabel

CAMBRIDGE, *March* 23, 1890

How long is it since I wrote you a real letter? During my ten days in Phila., I was too idle to write, and since my return, I have been almost too busy. Tuesday, I went up to St. Paul's School to talk to the boys about reading. It seemed strange, very strange, to be back there after sixteen years. Schoolboy reminiscences crowded back upon me, and something like the old feeling of gloom and melancholy was revived merely by the sight of the blue dismal hills and long meadows in their winter barrenness. And yet it seemed impossible, after all, to plunge below the surface of memories and to bring up the actual feelings of so many years ago. In being confronted thus with your past, you appear to yourself to be two different persons, yet strangely united by that unbroken current of identity

through which all you are, or have been, flows constantly forward. . . .

I am busy on an historical sketch of Harvard College, which, I wrote you some time ago, I promised to write before the first of June: and I regret the promise, because to fulfil it I must give up the Italian History for the present; yet the Harvard chronicle is more interesting than I expected. Truly, most of us don't realize from what small beginnings our State rose, nor the difficulties which the grim, staunch men of the 17th and 18th centuries had to overcome. I have learned more about Increase and Cotton Mather during the past two days than I ever knew before, and most uncomfortable, bitter fellows they were. They had Bible phrases on their lips and all the malice and venom and selfish pride of Satan in their hearts. So clearly possible is it for a man to be the strictest churchman and most unchristian at the same time. Whatever Cotton Mather touched he left a repellent trace upon — like that bug which leaves a bad smell and nauseating taste on raspberries.

The proposed Harvard publication here met with stubborn resistance from the Corporation, who think that it would be undignified for the University to 'advertise itself' in any way. I shan't regret not having the responsibility, but I think that the College owes it to itself and the public to print a record of the intellectual work done here. . . .

To his Sister Mabel

CAMBRIDGE, *March* 31, 1890

. . . I have been busy with the early chronicles of Harvard, during the past ten days. I think I wrote you something about them last week, and since then I have come upon other interesting records which illustrate the lives

of our ancestors, with their quarrels, perseverance, and bigotry, now so long vanished: only, the monuments of their perseverance still remain, and the University bears witness to all in their character which was noble and wise.

We had an excellent lecture the other evening from W. M. Salter, whom (I think) you have heard in Chicago. He spoke on Ethics, but in so high and impressive a tone, and applying his principles so clearly to the criticism of our present social conditions, that it did me a great good to hear him. He quoted largely from Emerson, whom he seems to have taken for his guide, and I thought it strange that Emerson should be re-introduced to Cambridge by a lecturer from Chicago. But so it was: for the spirit of instruction in literature at College now has turned away from Emerson: the men who instruct look at literature as a product of skill — a trick, or sleight of the mind — and not as an expression of the spirit. Dobson, Andrew Lang, and Pater are the present models — those concocters of sweetly-flavored méringues, and whipped cream: but the time may come when the Masters will once more be listened to as reverently as they deserve.

I bought an admission ticket to the Park Theatre Saturday afternoon, and saw Salvini's farewell performance in *Othello*. The audience was so small, that I had no trouble in getting a seat. His acting, I thought, was more marvellous than ever: the tremendous outbursts of passion were as awful as formerly, but in the other scenes he was, if anything, mellower, subtler, and more wonderful. A voice like his we shall never hear again: indeed, such an actor as he will probably not be born for a century to come. I thought how Shakespeare would have enjoyed to see his imagination embodied in gesture, port, and intonation, so far as these can ever express the immaterial shades of ideas.

The greatest actor cannot fully exhaust Shakespeare's possibilities: as we read, the imagination pictures to itself something yet greater than can be represented on the stage. . . .

To his Sister Mabel

CAMBRIDGE, *April* 6, 1890

. . . That old letter of mine you sent me set me to thinking on this subject. I don't agree with you that Mamma was unappreciative; on the contrary she was most sensible. Certainly, there was not one atom of the infant prodigy about me in my youth, and had there been, she would have been much wiser to repress rather than to encourage it. And if she never expressed much surprise or satisfaction at my juvenile scribbling, it was because she knew well enough that it had no intrinsic value. To be sure, I passed thro' the phase common to most boys and girls when I believed that I was misunderstood, and that a little praise would have helped me to produce great things; but I now understand that great things are really produced by men who can get along without praise, and who do their work patiently, often almost desperately, let the public treat it as they may.

I think we are all of us deluded in youth by the idea that genius manifests itself by sudden spurts — that we have only to sit still, and lo! the wonderful fountain will gush up: but this is a delusion. Behind almost every valuable work you will find character, perseverance, and power gradually accumulated, so that there is no miracle of the 'Special Providence' kind, but a very evident manifestation of cause and effect. So I believe that if I shall do anything in the world, it will be by gradual, cumulative effort: not one essay or poem, but the total result of all will be the question for critics to decide. . . .

To his Sister Mabel

CAMBRIDGE, *Oct.* 26, 1890

DEAR MAB:

M. P. has sent me a little book about Emerson which, after I have read it, I am to forward to you. I will send it to-morrow, and I am sure that you will enjoy it, nay, more, that you will be helped by it, for it contains much of the Emersonian strength and cheerfulness. His spiritual vigor is contagious, and always makes it easier for us to confront bravely the perplexities before us. . . .

I have been busy with politics this past week, helping to arrange for a meeting of Independents. I needn't tell you how deeply I feel the present public corruption, which embodies itself in the unholy Tariff Bill. I wouldn't lift a finger merely because this new law takes money out of my pocket; but I intend to fight as hard as I can because this law is immoral, hypocritical and unjust.[1] Of course, here in Cambridge nearly every one thinks as I do, because the men I know have no selfish interest in the matter, but in the country as a whole how many are willingly rascals, and how many more are unthinking dupes. . . .

. . . Royce's lecture is the chief intellectual treat of my week. Miss Bessie Ware goes with me, and that makes it all the pleasanter, because she is so sane and sympathetic a woman. . . .

To his Sister Mabel

CAMBRIDGE, *Dec.* 21, 1890

. . . McCarthy's *History* is good. I should begin by going over the Victorian Age very briefly, so as to impress the chief events on the girls' minds. Then take up McCarthy, and they will be able to see, in his detailed account,

[1] The McKinley Tariff Act.

how one event was connected with those before and after it. Unless history reveals relations, it is comparatively useless. Too many persons have a mere smattering of names and incidents, without understanding the connecting links. Hence, confusion and futility, and the common complaint that history is dry. But let it be seen that a great drama is constantly in progress; that causes lead to effects, that movements grow and cease — and it will be the study of studies, and more interesting than novels.

I have been reading Stendhal's *Promenades dans Rome*, two entertaining volumes by one of the best French writers of the century, and a clear-eyed observer who noted many facts and jotted down many anecdotes of much service to me in my attempt to understand how the Italians lived two generations ago.

Goodbye, dear. I wish you all a merry Christmas, and that I could do more to make it merrier. . . .

In the summer of 1891 Thayer went abroad again. This was his fourth trip, his third with Harry Apthorp as companion. They visited France and Italy and Germany and Thayer saw England again, for the first time since he was a youth, in 1874. Returning to America in the fall he gave up his Cambridge lodgings and spent the next year in Concord.

To his Sister Mabel

CONCORD, MASS^TTS: *Dec.* 20, 1891

. . . What piece of side-work do you think I have taken up? Well, you could not guess, so I will tell you at once; I am selecting from the last 35 years of Carlyle's correspondence such letters as it seems to me to be desirable to print. Mr. Norton asked me to help him in this work,

which he has brought down to 1845, and he will, of course, look over my selection and give it his final approval. I was afraid when he made the suggestion that I should have the responsibility of taking care of the original letters, but happily all except those to Mrs. Carlyle have been copied — and those I have left with Mr. N. for the present. The letters I have read thus far are all from Carlyle to his family, and they show how really affectionate he was, and how solicitous to help not only them but any old person of his Scotch acquaintance who was in need. On the whole, they are not so interesting as I expected, but they are valuable as showing a side of C.'s character that has been unfairly neglected.

Mr. Norton read to me one of Lowell's posthumous poems — on Gen[l] Grant, one of the very best of his that I ever heard. It will be published during the winter in some magazine.

Norton's translation of *Purgatory* has come, and that too will take up some of my spare hours. I like to have a little side-work to which I can turn from my main-work, the History. That progresses fairly, and is now full in the chaos of the Revolution of 1848. How it is all going to turn out, I don't know. Sometimes I get quite out of conceit with it: the gloomy grey days, I suppose, tinge my mind with their cheerlessness; but I shall go on to the end, which is now not many months ahead. . . .

To his Sister Mabel

CONCORD, *May* 2, 1892

I let last week slip by without sending you even a line. Writing is such an effort to me, whose profession is writing. But now I have got rid of the History and sent it on its travels in search of a publisher: so that until that elusive

creature is entrapped, and proof-sheets begin to come, I shall free my thoughts of that matter. I scarcely realize as yet that the work of three years, the work which has been my central thought and endeavor for so long, is at last ended. For a while, I suppose, I shall feel quite at sea; but I have several projects in my head, and I shall see what I can do with one or more of them when I have rested a little. Just at present, I have a bad cold — the first for me of the season, but a little sun-bath will melt it out, if only warm weather will come. . . .

To his Sister Mabel

THOREAU HOUSE
CONCORD, *June* 8, 1892

. . . I am just now busy helping to get out the first number of a Harvard Quarterly Magazine. It is to be about as large as *The Forum*, and it is possible that I may become its permanent editor if my terms are agreed to.[1]

Enclosed is a little remembrance for your birthday, with my best wishes. To think that you will be 40 years old! What a life you have led, and how brave you have been, dear! It makes me ashamed of myself to think that I have done no more for you. You say nothing about Mabel's Sketching trip.

To his Sister Mabel

CONCORD, *July* 19/92

. . . You will be glad to hear that Houghton, Mifflin & Co. have accepted my History, which will be published early in 1893. I suppose I ought to feel elated, but I don't — this success seems trivial to me just now. Editorial

[1] Thayer was editor of *The Harvard Graduates' Magazine* from its first issue until September, 1915, when he resigned.

William Roscoe Thayer
1892

work keeps me pretty busy, and I shall soon be forced to be busier to keep from being snowed under a storm of proof-sheets. . . .

Can I do or get anything for you? Any lick-wich-chewer wanted?

Love to the dear children.

To his Sister Mabel

CONCORD, *July* 28, 1892

Thanks for your note. I'm glad to know that you are all well, and apparently getting along as comfortably as you could expect. The weather has been scorching hot, so that I have rejoiced that you weren't here to reproach me; but I, as you know, enjoy it. I played tennis on the two hottest days, and felt better after it. The Magazine work keeps me reasonably busy, and I shall soon be busier with that and with the proof-sheets of my History. Internally, I feel a little calmer, tho' this may be only temporary. *She* has gone away for the summer, and now my one chief desire is to have October come and bring her back. Verily, love is a strange and awful thing, before which, at times, it seems as if I must be overwhelmed. But, as Emerson says, 'all other pleasures are not worth its pains.' I, at least, could never have supposed that it could so completely possess me, or that it could torture so poignantly. Well — it's better to say little on this subject. When I think of her, it seems as if I had done wrong to confide even in you. . . .

To his Sister Mabel

COLONIAL CLUB
CAMBRIDGE, *Oct.* 3, 1892

DEAR MAB:

The impossible has happened — I am engaged to Elizabeth Ware. For six days I have known what it is to be

supremely happy. I wish, dear Mabel, that this might have been decided in time for you to have seen Elizabeth before you went West. You will find her a sister staunch and loving, and the more you know her the more you will wonder that she consented to have me. I cannot, of course, tell you anything about her that would be satisfactory. . . .

To his Sister Mabel

COLONIAL CLUB
CAMBRIDGE, *Jan.* 16, 1893

DEAR MAB:

The first greeting I had this morning was your welcome note. Thanks, dear, for all your good wishes: if wishing would but bring happiness, I am sure we would gladly exchange them, and so both be happy. Surely, I never dreamed — tho' I dreamed much — what it would be to have the continuous blessing of intimacy with a woman like Bess. These are matters indeed unutterable, and I understand why the ancient Greeks were almost afraid of felicity. . . .

. . . Since we came back from Philadelphia we have been passing thro' a zone of dinners and parties, and thus far our digestions have not suffered. Still, we begin to look forward to quiet evenings again, to be spent in reading or in talking. I am reading aloud, rather irregularly owing to the aforesaid parties, Sybel's *History of the Founding of the German Empire* — not a master-work by any means, but apparently accurate as far as it goes. You can imagine what a help and pleasure it is to have someone to discuss these matters with, someone whose sense of justice is infallible, and who fixes instinctively on what is simple and downright. I have known no other woman whose opinions on books are as sound as hers — tho' she is not in the least

bookish; indeed, she literally flees from pen and ink, and would walk a mile rather than write the shortest note. She is such a sister and friend as you above all would appreciate and love, and I constantly regret that there are a thousand miles between you. . . .

The second number of the *Harvard Magazine* is out, and has made a strong impression: if I can keep it at this level there is no doubt but that it will be a good influence. I have got back my mental energy, and have several small topics simmering in my head, with the probability that one or more of them will have vent erelong. . . .

My History will be formally published on Saturday. Should you see any notice of it in the Chicago papers, send me a slip: I don't expect to get much help from the hasty reviewers, but I will keep such of their scribbles as fall in my way to illustrate the vacuity of the system. . . .

To his Sister Mabel

CAMBRIDGE: *Jan.* 29/93

The event of the week has been the death of Phillips Brooks. Not in our time has there been such a concentration, a very tidal wave, of grief over the vanishing of any other public man. It redeems much of our sordidness and corruption to think that one man, speaking wholesome and human words, could touch tens of thousands of hearts. The Episcopalians of course made much over him as bishop, but the general reverence, the admiration and love felt for him had nothing to do with his being of that sect. It was, I have always thought, a mere chance that he happened to be an Episcopalian: his personality would have drawn just as great crowds had he been a Baptist or a Jew. Perhaps it is lucky that Providence has not sent a Mussulman with his fire and spirituality among us, or we

might all be turning Mahometan! It's likely that a statue will be erected in front of Trinity — a fit place for it: but can they get an adequate sculptor? — I was editorially touched by his death, because he had promised me an article for the next number of the *Magazine*. . . .

CHAPTER IV

A PERIOD OF ILL HEALTH

1893–1904

Miss Elizabeth Hastings Ware, whose engagement to William Roscoe Thayer was announced in the preceding chapter, was the daughter of Henry Ware, Harvard '43, and of Ellen Hastings Ware. She was the granddaughter of the Reverend William Ware, one of the leaders of Early Unitarianism in this country, long time the minister of All Souls' Church in New York, and author of *Zenobia*, and *Aurelian*, books which in their day enjoyed a great popularity. A great-grandfather was Benjamin Waterhouse, who had studied the work of Jenner and who introduced vaccination into this country. A great-grandmother was a sister of John Hancock.

The marriage took place November 24, 1893, in the house, 8 Berkeley Street, Cambridge, where Elizabeth Ware was born and where she had always lived. It was to continue to be her home, for there the young couple took up their residence, and there their entire married life was destined to be passed. In 1896 their only child, Margaret Ware Thayer, was born.

In January, 1893, Thayer's first serious history was published, his *Dawn of Italian Independence*. He had already brought out two small volumes of verse, *The Confessions of Hermes* (1884) and *Hesper* (1888), for poetry was his first literary passion and remained through life his deepest. He had also published a number of essays, literary, historical, biographical. But the task on which he had spent most of his time since settling in Cambridge in 1887 was his

study of the life and times of Cavour, the greatest of Italian statesmen in modern times, the wisest of nation-builders. This was to be Thayer's chief preoccupation for almost a quarter of a century. What he intended to be only the introductory chapters of the biography of Cavour had grown to such proportions under his hand that he had decided in the end to make a separate work of them — and it was thus that *The Dawn of Italian Independence* came into existence. This was a history of Italy from 1815 through the revolutions of 1848 and 1849. It furnished a large and luminous background for the career of the great statesman who wrought the marvel of Italian unification.

It was in 1892 that he began another of the literary activities which was to occupy his attention for many years. He became the editor of *The Harvard Graduates' Magazine* and remained its editor until 1915. He at once put the *Magazine* on a high plane, and kept it there. The first issue (September, 1892) contained articles on 'The Worth of a University,' by A. P. Peabody, '26; on 'Harvard Men in Politics,' by Theodore Roosevelt, '80; on 'The Schools' Examination Board,' by Charles W. Eliot, '53; on 'The Alumnus and his Son,' by Wendell Phillips Garrison, '61; and on 'Harvard's Loss of Athletic Prestige,' by the editor's brother, F. W. Thayer, '78. Several of the letters which appear in this volume reveal his thoughtfulness and fearlessness in the exacting and often ungrateful rôle of editorial arbiter.

References to these various occupations and enterprises occur, as the reader has had occasion to see, in the correspondence with his sister, printed in the preceding chapter. It has seemed wise to let that correspondence stand alone and not to include letters written to other persons

during that period and referring to matters mentioned in them. One such letter, addressed to Mr. Norton, is now given here, though chronologically a little out of place.

To Charles Eliot Norton

THOREAU HOUSE
CONCORD, *Feb.* 27, 1892

DEAR MR. NORTON:

I send you per American Express the last batch of Carlyle letters. I'm afraid you may be astonished at first at the size of the parcel marked 'for publication,' but if you will look into it you will see that in many cases I have left only a small fragment. This is especially the case in references to Carlyle's books. It seemed to me advisable, so far as possible, to trace his progress on the *Life of Frederick*, *Sterling*, etc. Perhaps this may result in too scrappy a selection — but of that you can judge better than I. I have also included references to more personal matters — when he first put on glasses, let his beard grow, had his attic study made, his awning in the garden, his hours of work, etc., etc., all of which, tho' separately of no great account, give in the aggregate a more definite idea of the man's life. I have further selected a few illustrations of his generosity to his family, and to poor friends and applicants. His allusions to books and public events are all here, — no single important one omitted, I think, — and these, on the whole, are by far the most interesting. His description of Macaulay — 'The sublime of the commonplace' and 'intellectual hippopotamus' — of Thackeray, of the 'impenitent Venetian Jew,' Dizzy — of Palmerston, and many others will all go to complete his remarkable gallery of portraits. After his mother's death, the interest in his letters wanes — for ten years there is a continuous groan

over *Frederick;* the letters to Alick usually give the best summary of his movements during the preceding six months or year; those to John and Mrs. Aitken being chiefly concerned with affairs of the moment.

I have been unable to verify any of the quotations which Froude gives of the letters during this period. Can it be that Froude kept the originals? On the whole, I am disappointed that Carlyle, having the best men of his time as companions, has left so little memorial of their conversation. Suppose Dr. Johnson's correspondence were filled with such brief notes as this: 'Burke and Reynolds here last night; clatter, clatter, *ach Gott!*' Or, 'Goldsmith here for three hours—better silence than *that*, eheu! eheu!' Yet this is about all we get from Carlyle of his talks with Darwin, Tennyson, Thackeray, Forster, &c. &c. But of course I recognize that we must take Carlyle as we find him — a great and very true man, not to be hastily reckoned with or shelved, and one who surpassed all the other Britons of his age in moral force. . . .

I wish to thank you again for the great privilege of allowing me to go over Carlyle's letters: I only wish that my sifting may be of some real service to you, tho' I am afraid your first remark will be, 'He has used too coarse a sieve.'

Ever very truly yours

Wᴹ R. Thayer

To Horace E. Scudder

Cambridge, *Oct.* 22, 1894

Dear Mr. Scudder:

I hear that you went sponsor for me at the time of my election to the Massachusetts Historical Society, and I

want to thank you.[1] The election was wholly a surprise, and the pleasantest that could come — of that sort, for I have long looked upon the Massachusetts Historical Society as the most honorable body to belong to that exists in this country. Certainly, I hope that you will never have reason to regret your advocacy of this particular neophyte.

I think that you will be interested to know that my little volume of poems seems to be making its way.[2] Mr. Stoddard — whom I never knew — has reviewed it as enthusiastically as Mr. Stedman has previously written privately. I sent a copy to George Meredith, who, for several years past, has honored me with complimentary copies of his works, and he speaks highly of *Halid*. All of which I submit, not vaingloriously, but because your friendly interest hitherto makes me think you may care to hear this. — After all, it's a long distance between the approval of the few whose opinions we value, and that public recognition which completes it; and the top of Parnassus lifts higher and higher as we grow older.

Again thanking you, I am

Sincerely yours

Wm. R. Thayer

One of the homes in which Thayer had been a frequent guest during the years that he spent in Philadelphia was

[1] Thayer was a member of the Society from October 11, 1894, until his death on September 7, 1923. He was a member of its Council from April, 1897, until his death, with the exception of the years 1898–1902. He was Corresponding Secretary from April, 1912, to 1923. The volumes of the Society's *Proceedings* show that he was a frequent contributor of papers. In a later chapter (Chap. V) are several letters which attest his interest in the activities and the prosperity of the Society.

[2] A new volume of verse entitled, *Poems, Old and New*, published in 1894 by Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

that of Dr. Horace Howard Furness. The friendship then begun continued as long as Dr. Furness lived. The following letters written in 1896 refer to events of great importance in the lives of both.

To Horace Howard Furness

CAMBRIDGE, *Feb.* 1, 1896

I must send you a line, to tell you that you have been often in my mind these past two days. For your venerable father,[1] what close more fitting could have come to a long and noble life? It is as near translation as is permitted — and he deserved it.

But for you — who could ever speak in tones that did not seem untimely, to those who bear such a loss? No one, I think, except your father, whose brief words of comfort after Mrs. Peacock's death have come to me again and again.

If I could do anything, be sure that I gladly would.

To Horace Howard Furness

CAMBRIDGE, *May* 3, 1896

The treasurer of the *Magazine* is at last able to give the number of copies to be printed in June, to wit — 5000. I am writing by this mail to notify the same to Gutekunst — in case you are still catching tarpon — and to ask him to have the portraits in Cambridge by May 20.

Mr. Ames's sketch of your father seems to me to be very good — *multum in parvo*, which always commends itself to the writer greedy of space — but of course no written word can adequately describe that presence which was the

[1] William Henry Furness (1802–1896), a distinguished Unitarian clergyman and Abolitionist of Philadelphia.

real Dr. Furness for those who knew and loved him. To do that adequately, would be to perform the miracle of resurrection.

I trust that you had good sport in the South — not that you need to have caught big strings, but simply to have your thoughts diverted, if that was your object.

Bessie and I have just picked some cherry-blossoms in our garden: So we too have Arcadia at our threshold — as you have had these many weeks.

To Horace Howard Furness

CAMBRIDGE, *Aug.* 2, 1896

I meant to acknowledge ere this the memoirs, but I have really been unable. For we have been adding a daughter to our household, and as her coming almost coincided with Will Russell's death — with whom and his wife we were more intimate than most brothers and sisters are — there was the added strain. And as W. R. T. was run down before all this happened, he had hard work to keep from complicating matters by giving out himself. Now, however, Mrs. Thayer and little Margaret are thriving, and we apprehend no further difficulties. But Russell's loss remains for us.

I hope you have had a good summer. How I should like to spend another Sunday at Wallingford, and to have you know my wife and her know you!

The following letter was written to Mrs. William E. Russell on the occasion of the second anniversary of the death of her husband, Governor Russell, the friend of the Thayers referred to in the preceding letter.

To Margaret Russell

BAR HARBOR, ME.: *July* 15, 1898

DEAR MARGARET:

Just two words to tell you that though we think and talk of you every day, you are particularly in our minds these days. Often it seems to me that your brave cheerfulness must rejoice Will, if, as we hope, those who have gone before us watch our lives here. I can't write more, what are words, after all, to the thoughts and experiences amid which we pass from mystery to mystery. Of one thing only there can be no doubt — that love is the supreme boon — and that we who have had this may hope for all good in the future.

Love from us all to you and the children.

Ever affectionately yours

WM. R. THAYER

Most unhappily for the continuance of his literary work, postponing for many years his biography of Cavour, for which he had so liberally prepared himself and to which he looked forward with such zest, Thayer suffered in 1896 a serious nervous breakdown. For four or five years he was able to do nothing that involved any concentration or continuity of effort. With great difficulty and self-distrust the *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, so auspiciously begun, was kept going and the sense that he was accomplishing something had a considerable therapeutic value, relieving for a few moments at least, now and then, the deep melancholia of these days, a melancholia diversified at times by twinges of hysteria. Beyond this Thayer could do little. Even his correspondence was interrupted and we have few letters for several years of this trying period. The convalescence from this long depression was extremely slow.

About 1899 Thayer began to write again, but only an occasional letter to some friend. Thus on December 5, 1899, he writes to H. Nelson Gay, of Rome, whose interest in the history of the Risorgimento had been aroused by the reading of *The Dawn of Italian Independence* and who had written him offering the use of books:

'As to my own work, *The Dawn of Italian Independence* I meant to serve as introduction to the *Life and Times of Cavour*, and I have been ruminating this for ten years past. I even got so far as to write about a quarter of Volume I, when my health broke down three years ago and I have not yet had the courage to reread the manuscript. Very slowly, I have been crawling back to health, so that now I dare hope to be able to resume work on Cavour next autumn. But to write history as I conceive it tugs my very vitals and I hardly expect, under the most favorable circumstances, to have *Cavour* ready for the press for four or five years.[1] I think of the amazing difficulties under which Parkman wrote, and take heart; only, taking heart does not yet bring the vigor of mind without which no book worth printing can be produced.'

In another letter to Gay, dated January 23, 1901, Thayer says: 'I grow stronger from month to month, and by next autumn I may seriously resume work on Cavour.' In another to the same, dated July 12, 1901, we have an interesting appreciation of a friend and neighbor:

'We are half way through our summer, and everything has gone well with us, except that I was troubled with the great heat. . . . I shall not soon forget it, because it killed John Fiske, whose loss to American letters is simply immense. Since Lowell died, he has been the only man we could point to as the peer of the best alive anywhere in the

[1] It was to prove twelve years.

world. By his exposition of evolution he did more than can ever be computed to strengthen thousands who had turned away horrified or ashamed from the monstrous old mythologies; and during the past twenty years he has been the chief agency in making American history the fashion. We often hear the dry-as-dusts disparage Fiske because he is popular, and they insinuate that he must be superficial; but I imagine that he has all their erudition *plus* the divine faculty of seeing and selecting essentials — which they never have. I shall also miss him in Cambridge, for he lived just above us on Berkeley St., and although owing to my illness I had not been able to go to his house the past few years, still he was always friendly when we met, and his huge figure had become as much a part of our Berkeley St. landscape, as our great maple tree itself. I have never seen any other person of extraordinary intellect equally unlucky in appearance; until he spoke, it seemed as incredible that a great mind was hidden in all that corporeal mass as that Behemoth should be capable of repartee.'

In a letter to Gay, dated April 13, 1902, thanking him for certain volumes concerning the Risorgimento, Thayer adds:

'There is evidently much interesting material in them. But how this subject grows! Happy the man who chooses to write on a period on which there is only one document — and that not in German. If I don't hurry up, there will be so many tons of stuff about matters that indirectly concern Cavour, that I shall never get to him at all. Historians now should be as Hercules in vigor and as Methuselah in length of days. What irony to have the average age of man 950 years in a time when Germans, monographs and all that had not been invented. Happy was Moses — by whatever name the author of those first chronicles ought to be called — who had nothing to "verify."'

In a letter written some months later to the same friend (November 14, 1902) Thayer announces that he has just received the order 'della Corona d'Italia.' 'So now I am a *cavaliere*, but as no *cavallo* seems to accompany the beautiful decoration, I shall continue to ride my rusty bicycle.'

Thus by 1901 Thayer was beginning to feel his way back into his favorite studies. But it proved to be several years before he could attack the great undertaking with that continuity and that intensity which are the imperative conditions of success in any important achievement in scholarship and literature. Meanwhile, to test his powers, to keep his mental health, to gain the encouragement that comes from a sense of accomplishment, even though the accomplishment be far less than one would wish, he began, in 1901, a sketch of the history of Venice, hoping to finish it in the course of the year. Disappointment was to follow him even here for it was not until four years later that the 'sketch,' grown into a volume, was finished and published. But this task had served, as he once told the editor of these letters, 'to save my life.' Instead of being able to work only two or three hours a day, his stint gradually increased and approached normal.

The following letters to his friend, Harrison S. Morris, editor of *Lippincott's Magazine*, reflect a little of the strain and of the recuperation of this period.

To Harrison S. Morris

CAMBRIDGE, *Oct.* 6, 1901

I hoped that somehow you could drop in on us at our North Shore cottage[1] during the summer — indeed, I ought to have written to suggest it, for now that I am able

[1] Mr. and Mrs. Thayer usually spent their summers with Mrs. Thayer's sister Mary (Mrs. Robert de W. Sampson), at Magnolia, Massachusetts.

to talk again, I am eager to see old friends. Four years' exile in the *bolgia* where my lot has been cast, makes me relish the air of the upper world to a degree you more fortunate fellows can't understand. And with the relish, comes a queer wonder whether this state is a happy dream you are having in Hades, or whether the four years' horrors were really a nightmare which persecuted you on Earth. The answer — well, it doesn't matter.

How are you, and your wife, and the little girl? Why don't you write the poem 'To a Little Daughter,' which for twenty-five hundred years the world has been waiting for. I judge that the *New Lippincott's* thrives in your hands. . . .

To Harrison S. Morris

CAMBRIDGE, *June* 6, 1904

Your letter just got the start of this, which has been on its way to you all the week. I am delighted to hear all your news and particularly to see that, in spite of the whirl you live in you still are as vigorous as ever. 'Don't overdo,' is the chronic advice of one who has had his share of torments.

My first object in writing (before your letter came) was to find out whether the Pegasus Club, all or several, or other Philadelphia friends of the Muses, won't join in a subscription to the Monument of Petrarch which the city of Arezzo, his birthplace, is to erect to commemorate his 600th birthday. I was asked several months ago to collect what I could, in order that America may be represented in this international tribute. Petrarch, I need hardly say, has claims on posterity not only because he was a great poet, but also because he was the pioneer of modern culture, of archæology, classical philology *et al.* Now if every fellow who has committed a sonnet will purchase abso-

lution by even a small offering, we shall be able to send to the Committee at Arezzo a *sizable* sum. The celebration culminates on July 20, and if you expect to go abroad, you will find it worth while to attend it.

Don't regard this as a dun, please, but possibly at your suggestion the Pegasus bards may think it a privilege to join in such an enterprise, or you may even know unrhyming gentlemen who are aching to send a V or an X to so noble a cause. Begging isn't my forte: but I couldn't very well refuse to serve as beggar for Messer Francesco's glory. . . .

This Spring I have really felt some energy again in writing, and, if nothing breaks loose, I shall have my *Short History of Venice* ready for the press by Thanksgiving.

By the way, I have a chapter on 'The Legends and Pageants of Venice,'[1] originally prepared as a lecture, which I didn't intend to incorporate in the book. It is popular, full enough of color, I think, and might do for a magazine article. If from that description you think it might interest *Lippincott's* (oughtn't I to say *Lippincotts's*) public, I will send it on for you to look over. . . .

Thayer's duties as editor of *The Harvard Graduates' Magazine* served as a distraction and consequently as an aid to a recovery of self-confidence during this period of convalescence. They were not so exacting as to be burdensome and they were varied enough and sufficiently interesting to divert his attention and to lift him out of the slough of despond which was the normal and natural accompaniment of his illness. They brought him into connection, or maintained a connection already established,

[1] Published in *Lippincott's Magazine*, November, 1904; republished in *Italica*, 1908.

with other men at a time when the tendency to introspection and futile repining was strong, indeed inevitable. They furnished problems or topics of thought that relieved the monotony of an existence that seemed to him, only too often, frustrated and futile.

To Charles F. Thwing

MAGNOLIA, MASS., *Sept.* 12, 1901

I am heartily obliged to you for your kind letter. The *Magazine* is so thoroughly a *Harvard* enterprise, and not mine, that I can safely listen to your commendation; and after all, an editor knows that his best number is not nearly so good as it would have been, if he could have captured all the contributions he tried for.

I am glad to have you confirm my own belief — that the *Magazine* contains much material of general and permanent interest. We work under difficulties, all of which resolve themselves into the central difficulty in all university affairs — lack of adequate funds. Poverty may be a moral tonic to the individual, but in concerns like this it is rather inconvenient and exasperating.

Let me take this opportunity of congratulating you on the great progress at Western Reserve under your direction. I rejoice at it, because education seems to me the one antidote for the evils of the times, and because your success there in a way brings credit to Harvard, our incomparable *alma mater*.

To M. A. DeWolfe Howe

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *March* 3, 1902

Excuse my delay. Your verses have put me into an editorial quandary. For self-preservation, the *Magazine*

has made a rule never to print obituary poems: we had so many — a 400-line threnody on Dr. Peabody, at the very beginning! Yet I should like to print yours, because they are good. But if I do, how can I refuse any of the thousand others which will immediately pour in? It is not the poetry but the tribute, which each writer of these has at heart, and the tribute may be as sincere in bad verse as in good — and there's the rub which gives the editor of this particular magazine much trouble.

If you are in no hurry, may I keep your MS. a little while, and think over the matter? I incline to run the risk.

To M. A. DeWolfe Howe

CAMBRIDGE, *March* 19, 1902

The poem shall be printed in the department of general notes, where I have sometimes reprinted other poems, e.g., Hanscom's on Roosevelt last time. Everyone will read it there.[1]

Of course I am glad to have it — you understand the editorial hesitation. A proof shall go to you in due season. . . .

To M. A. DeWolfe Howe

CAMBRIDGE: *June* 5, 1904

Thank you indeed for your note. You have done so much to make the peerless record of dear old Boston known to this generation, that I especially prize your commendation of my Sam Adams verses.[2] I never pass the Granary Burying Ground without feeling that that alert, indomitable and inquisitive patriot is catechizing me on my worthiness to be his fellow-citizen.

[1] Howe's verses, in memory of Hamilton Kuhn, Harvard '87, were published in *The Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, June, 1902.

[2] 'At the Grave of Samuel Adams.' *The Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1904.

One of Thayer's Cambridge friends with whom he had frequent contacts in these and in later years was Walter Hines Page who came to Boston in 1895 to be associated with the publishing house of Houghton, Mifflin & Company and who, in 1898, succeeded Horace E. Scudder as editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*. The two men were very sympathetic and their personal and professional relations most pleasant and profitable. Living in the same town for several years there was slight occasion for correspondence. In 1899 Mr. Page removed to New York where he founded and edited *The World's Work*, a magazine in which Thayer was much interested from the start and to which he contributed from time to time.

The following letter to Page gives Thayer's impressions of the new venture, *The World's Work*. It has already been published in part, and Mr. Page's interesting and appreciative reply in full, in Hendrick's *Life and Letters of Walter H. Page*.[1]

To Walter Hines Page

CAMBRIDGE, *Dec.* 4, 1900

DEAR MR. PAGE:

I have waited long before writing you about *The World's Work;* and yet I was so anxious to see the first number that I got the first copy from the first package that reached Amee's. I brought it home and read it, and Mrs. Thayer read it: and I concluded that I would think it over, and even see the second number, before writing to you. Praise enough you were sure to hear of it, and, after all, the voice of a cloistered critic would matter little.

So Number 2 has come, and I feel that I must send you some word. The magazine has surprised me greatly, and

[1] Vol. I, pp. 66-70.

— in so far as it is unlike what I expected — there is disappointment in my surprise. From your point of view, there can be very unqualified commendation: you have hit the bull's-eye the first time — with a new form of firearm. Of course, I never doubted that you would, for when you edited *The Forum* I perceived that no such talent for editing had been seen in America before, and when, a little later, you rejuvenated the *Atlantic*, making it for a couple of years the best periodical printed in English, I felt that you had a great mission before you as evoker and editor of the best literary work and weightiest thought on important topics of our foremost men. I regretted more than I can tell you, your going to New York, because I felt that you had reached the point here where the *Atlantic* was plastic in your hands and might long be a powerful influence for good.

Naturally, therefore, when you gave the first hint of the proposed *World's Work*, I had a vision of a magazine as far ahead of the *Atlantic* in quality, as that has been ahead of *The Forum* — such a magazine as I believed you best fitted to create. Well, *The World's Work* — instead of my vision — has come to pass. It is bound to have a large clientèle, whom it will help, but what opening does it afford for the *best* work — which is, after all, deliberate, sober, mellow, imaginative? Of course, it may develop in any one of several directions, and I don't mean to judge hastily, but in the two numbers already published I do not see how it need ever have for its constitution John Fiske or Pres. Eliot, James or Royce or Norton, or Bryce, or any other of the really *worth-while* men whom you drew to the *Atlantic*. The great body of readers, I should suppose, will support it because of its tremendous vim — you seem to have a 70-inch drive wheel in sufficient revolution — its

strenuous resolve to interpret everything optimistically, the terseness and cock-sureness of its editorials, and its admirable illustrations. But how many of them would read say John Fiske's forthcoming lecture on Immortality (which you would surely capture for the *Atlantic* were you still in command there) or any other really important utterance?

There, in a nutshell, lies my perplexity — the reason why I did not immediately send off a *bravissimo!* as I had hoped to do. After a month's reflection on the matter, it presents itself to me in this form, and I tell you it frankly, for I respect you too much to suppose you want anything but frankness.

I feel so intensely the potentiality for good or evil of books and magazines, and especially that every channel through which the *best* thought can issue should be kept open, — that I shall watch *The World's Work* very anxiously. And I surely wish you and it every success. You are such a magician that you may metamorphose it above even my ideals.

I laughed over your self-composed epitaph 'He Killed the Preface.' What I am afraid will be the epitaph that the next generation will write for the highest form of magazine will be, 'Killed by the Kodak.' It is so much easier to look at pictures than to read — which involves thinking.

Excuse this long blast.

Mrs. Thayer joins me in warm remembrance to Mrs. Page, and I am as ever,

Heartily yours

Wm. R. Thayer

To Walter Hines Page

CAMBRIDGE, *Feb.* 3, 1904

MY DEAR PAGE:

Several times you have kindly urged me to write an article on Pres[t] Eliot and I have had to say 'By-an-by.' Do you still want it? Circumstances have come round so that I could write it, provided my authorship shall remain for the present a secret to everyone except you. Is that possible? Could I send the MS. so that you alone should see it? I ask for complete anonymity, because I want to say my say unhampered. I don't want to vilify, but may want to praise, and I can't write praise of a man in power, for I think he might think I did so for some selfish motive. Pres[t] Eliot is not going to resign, so that it may be several years (I hope many) before his resignation would make such an article 'timely.' But March 20th is his 70th birthday, and at Commencement we are going to celebrate the completion of his 35th year as Pres[t]. As a 'topic' he is always in order.

If you say yes to this, please give me as much elbow room as possible. There is a great deal to say, but I don't intend to be diffuse. Mr. Dunbar, writing his strong article ten years ago, took 10,000 words. Would that stagger you now?

I am so placed that, if no mishap comes, I can probably give you copy in four or five weeks. Then you could print either in your April number, to coincide with his birthday, or in June.

I hope you thrive, and I only regret that in this wicked world I don't see more of you.

To Walter Hines Page

CAMBRIDGE, *May* 31, 1904

DEAR PAGE:

... Your account of the St. Louis Fair and of our Western brethren interests me greatly. If I were stronger, and had the money to spare, I would see them for myself: but I never visited but one exposition — that in Paris in '89 — and then, after an hour or two I began to feel as if I were a floor-walker in a Wanamaker caravansary. I hope that, when I revisit the glimpses of the moon, the Lord will give me a physique to match my intellectual eagerness, which has always been weighed down by this carcase.

Meanwhile, I rejoice that some men are made like you, and I hope you may long keep it up. What you say about the vigorous, healthy West, I believe is true. And yet I wish that with it there were a keener moral sense. The Spanish War and the Philippine Affair seem to me to show that our people — however excellent their intentions may be — can be stampeded into any policy, bad as well as good, like so many cattle. In that crisis they neither respected national tradition and the principles on which the Republic is founded, nor did they consider whether their action could be justified by the universal standard of right and wrong. This tendency to mobbishness, in which emotion is substituted for reason, and emotion quickly flares up as hysteria, is the most sobering phase that our national character has ever shown. For what will it profit us to have good intentions, to be vigorous and hopeful, if we run amuck, just like Paris communards or Chinese Boxers?

Yet — at bottom — tho' you may smile when I say so, I am an optimist; only, I don't believe that we shall ever

get far ahead until we frankly admit that our national conscience has been dulled, and that Uncle Sam, like each of his children, must turn over a new leaf. Mere political considerations no longer suffice; for we begin to realize that politics is only the surface, whereas what concerns the everyday relations of man with man, and what affects, either to strengthen or weaken, the family, is the essential heart of human life.

All praise to the *World's Work* for showing how improvements can be made in so many material directions: I wish that it could also counteract in some measure our cursed national fallacy that material success excuses all, and is the goal of all endeavor. . . .

To Walter Hines Page

HOTEL ALBRACCA
YORK HARBOR, MAINE: *July* 7, 1904

DEAR PAGE:

I meant to answer that interesting letter long ago, but I waited to get the July *W. W.*, and after it came there were many distractions to prevent writing till I got here. I am proud to be included in the 'Uplift Number.'[1] It is truly a record magazine, full of meat and of cheerful facts. I too persist in calling myself an optimist, if by that you mean a person who believes that the human race was never happier and better than it is today, and that it has unbounded possibilities of amelioration before it.

But I suppose I am more struck than you are by the vast tracts that are still unreclaimed, by the imperfect political and social and commercial systems, by the almost complete neglect of sexual education which is the most

[1] Thayer's article on President Eliot appeared in this issue.

needed of all, and by the ease with which national or personal self-complacency leads to moral disintegration. So, instead of hurrahing for what we have gained, I am inclined to point out what we have failed to do, in the hope that by such criticism we may be spurred on to accomplish that too.

And when I look deeper than the surface of life, — that surface where one most easily measures the improvements in comfort and general well-being, — I find tragedy in the very essense of being, which no philosophy nor creed has helped me to solve. *Hamlet* and *Job* express in different ways what I mean. But as I am well along in middle life, with so much time wasted behind me, I do not allow much speculation on these mysteries, which paralyze like the Gorgon's head, if one gaze on them too intently. All I ask for is strength to do a little of the task which lies just ahead, and is most imperiously asking to be done — whatever may be the upshot of the mystery.

You who have strength to work so splendidly, can never understand — I hope you never may — what it means to go through eight or nine years of eclipse, say rather of hell, unable to fulfil the ordinary duties of life, much less to try to achieve work to which you have devoted years of preparation. It isn't being taught by Fate that your aims and plans are of no importance that is hard to bear; it is being forced to live in a state of dry rot, and to be perpetually tantalized with the desire to do, when the power to do is denied.

Basta! I didn't intend to drop into this dismal subject, but your friendship lures me to self-confession. And after all, don't imagine from my growl that I am disheartened or sour. There's a dogged something inside which makes

me get up and plod on, yes, and honestly hope, after each drubbing. Like the tail of the maimed snake, I shall wriggle on till sundown.

Meanwhile I rejoice in the work which men like you and Pres. Eliot are doing. Long may you keep it up.

Thayer's interest in Harvard University was always keen and active. As a member of the Class of '81 he was rarely absent from its reunions. As editor of the *Graduates' Magazine* for twenty-three years he was brought into contact with a large number of its alumni and became well known to a constantly expanding circle of Harvard men. He used his editorial position for the intelligent furtherance of the interests of the University. The *Magazine* became the forum for the frank and serious discussion of educational problems which, while having special reference to Harvard, were of significance to education everywhere, to the nation as a whole.

Having no official connection with the University, Thayer was nevertheless intensely interested in its welfare and sought in every practical way to further it, and his somewhat detached point of view did not diminish his alertness. Wherever he could see a chance to be of service, he seized it. One of the institutions within the institution of the University, the Harvard Union, owes more to him than to anyone else. Upon this point Professor Bliss Perry speaks as follows in his *Life and Letters of Henry Lee Higginson:*[1]

'Was it possible to create at Harvard "conversation," as it was known at Oxford and Cambridge in England; to create that keen intelligence for public affairs, for contemporary questions of art and literature, which char-

[1] Page 351.

acterizes the foremost universities of the continent? One man, at least, believed so, William Roscoe Thayer, whom Major Higginson afterward described as "the father of the Union!" For four years, beginning in 1895, Mr. Thayer advocated his idea, backed by the *Crimson* and various committees; until, in 1899 Major Higginson offered $150,000 for the building.'

Charles Francis Adams, in his address at the opening of the Harvard Union, October 15, 1901, spoke as follows on this point: 'To the conception of William Roscoe Thayer it is that we owe the act of Major Higginson. . . . He allowed no rest to some of us until that idea assumed a substantial form. . . . Meetings inspired by him were held, and committees organized. Of those committees I was the figurehead, he was the efficient force. . . . At last the giver was found in the person of my familiar and life-long friend.'[1]

Two letters written by Thayer to President Roosevelt at this time have reference to the Union. A third shows Thayer's attempt to render another service to Harvard in a different field.

To Theodore Roosevelt

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *Oct.* 17, 1901

To President Roosevelt
White House, Washington

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

Just because everybody has been talking about the culminating episode at the dedication of the Harvard Union Tuesday night, possibly nobody may think to report it to you. Yet, as it concerns you chiefly, you ought to hear of it, and so I write.

[1] *The Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, December, 1901.

Major Henry Higginson, in giving the building to the students and graduates, made one of his matchless addresses — simple, right to the point, and from man's heart to man's heart. After saying how he hoped that the Union would foster friendship in college and loyalty to Harvard, he went on to urge the young fellows never to forget that the final test of education and of character lies in devotion to country. Then he spoke of President McKinley's assassination — 'a cowardly treacherous crime,' to which 'we reply by a renewal of our confession of faith, and by a stern resolve to square our daily thoughts and acts with our national faith and polity.'

Presently, Mr. Higginson paused, and we thought that he had done; but in a moment, stepping forward a little, he raised his right hand high, as in benediction, and added, 'God bless and guide aright our fellow-graduate, Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States.'

I have never seen anything more solemnly impressive; and for a little while there was a hush over the great audience. For myself, I had rather have such a benediction from Henry Higginson than from a whole chapter of bishops, and you should at least know about it.

I cannot send this without adding my own best wishes. I have often in the past differed from your views on public matters, but I have had the firmest faith in your motives, and now that you are President, I rejoice to think that none of your predecessors ever came to the White House having, as you have, the best wishes of literally the whole nation. That fact alone gives you a greater power for good than any other president has ever had; may you use it to the full and bless our country so that it shall forever bless your memory.

The great needs, the lasting achievements henceforth

are in peace not war, in overcoming the moral and intellectual, — not the physical — enemies of civilization. With your courage and your strength, and the knowledge that the nation is behind you, what may you not do! God prosper you! As an old-time friend and as a lover of my country, I cannot say less, and nothing that I could say would mean more.

Ever truly yours

Wm. R. Thayer

To Theodore Roosevelt

Cambridge, Mass., *Jan.* 5, 1902

Dear Mr. President:

The Harvard Union has recently had given to it a fine collection of the heads and antlers of great game, which are to be put in the Common Room. There is still room for more, and it occurs to the Trustees that you might be willing to give one of the trophies shot by yourself. The present members of the Union would appreciate it highly, and it would be prized hereafter. Our hope is to preserve at the Union as many souvenirs of our distinguished graduates as possible — the library has already many autograph copies of books by living Harvard men — so that, in the course of time the Union shall be rich in personal associations. In behalf of the Trustees, I hope that this suggestion will please you.

From myself, hearty congratulations to you on the vigor with which you have begun your great work, and best wishes that you may carry it through.

Ever cordially yours

Wm. R. Thayer

To Theodore Roosevelt

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *Nov.* 9, 1903

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

The Committee appointed by the Harvard Overseers to visit the Department of Modern History and Government, consists of James Ford Rhodes, Wm. G. Peckham, Wm. F. Wharton and myself. Saturday we met the professors in this Department and learned something of its needs. Chief among these is the immediate endowment of two or three professors' chairs, so that the teaching force can be strengthened. At present this Department, which has only about *one tenth* of the instructors in the College, gives *one sixth* of the total instruction — which sufficiently illustrates its needs.

It occurs to me that the Class of 1880 might endow a chair in Government. Could anything be more appropriate? The fact that '80 has produced a President of the United States, and Quincy, former Assistant Secretary of State, and now Gaston — shows the Class's drift towards practical participation in government: while another '80 man — Hart — has made the teaching of United States History and Government one of the most popular subjects at Harvard, and has gained a national reputation.

'79 has given the College $100,000 for the Stadium, which more than supplies all that Harvard's athletic development will require for years to come. Will not '80 go '79 one better, and found a professorship with a $5000 salary — giving for *brains* instead of *brawn?* '80 is richer than '79, and I have no doubt that if you made this suggestion to your Classmates, it would be enthusiastically carried through, and the Class would celebrate its 25th Commencement in 1905 with the satisfaction of having been the first to do so great a service to Mother Harvard.

Trusting that this plan may commend itself to you.
I am very truly yours
WM. R. THAYER

Another correspondent of these years was Countess Evelyn Martinengo Cesaresco, an English lady who had married into an old and famous Italian family and who had written several books on modern Italy, *Italian Characters*, *The Liberation of Italy*, and *Cavour*, all characterized by wide knowledge, by a sure and delicate interpretation of national and individual characteristics, and by a literary quality of rare distinction. The friendship of Thayer and Countess Cesaresco grew naturally out of the similarity of their interests and tastes and, beginning about 1899, increased steadily in strength as the years passed by. The gifts and the labors of these two scholars and literary artists were instrumental in giving to the English-speaking world a deeper and a truer understanding of modern Italy and its meaning than it had hitherto possessed. The one spoke primarily to England, the other primarily to America. Both spoke from the fulness of knowledge and with a disinterested love of truth.[1]

To Countess Cesaresco

CAMBRIDGE, *Jan.* 19, 1900

MY DEAR MADAM:

Your welcome note, with its New Year's greeting, came a few days ago. Let me wish you not merely *buon capo d'anno*, but *cent'anni* — as we used to say at Siena five and twenty years ago, when I was learning Italian and hardly

[1] In 1903 Thayer published in *The Nation* (Jan. 15) an interesting and discerning account of the life of Countess Cesaresco and of her achievements as an author. This article was later reproduced in his volume entitled *Italica* (1908).

comprehended the lifelong hold that Italy was getting on me. I begin to think that to those who see Italy for the first time now, she can never seem so enchanting as she was when I was a youth — but that too is part of her witchery — a bright delusion she has put into the hearts of each generation of her lovers for ever so many hundred years past.

Only the other day, I was reading for the first time your volume of Selections from Mrs. Piozzi, and was carried by them into a sort of fairy-land. Why is it? Reason says that Italy in 1786 was really dull enough; and yet in Mrs. Piozzi's description — as in Dr. John Moore's, whose *Travels* is an old favorite of mine, and in Montaigne's two centuries earlier — I feel the Italian spell. Before beginning to read, I wondered what you could say in your introduction, but when I had read it I wished that you had gone on. Has it ever occurred to you to write a book, or series of essays, on the characteristics of the various sections of Italy — I mean, of the *people* not of the *country?* It seems to me that you have stored up all the experience and observation and reading for this — you feel the different temperaments, which is more than merely knowing them. Symonds knew them pretty well, but I never get the impression in his books that he is other than the enlightened and interested Englishman in Italy. Vernon Lee too is certainly enlightened, and philosophic to boot, — and if she knew how to write compactly her books on Italy would be worth more than they are: but she could not achieve such a work as I have in mind. . . .

Since I began this letter, the news of Ruskin's death has come. I wonder whether he was ever as much to you as he was at one time to me. Even now, after deducting much, I still venerate him. For pageant of language he has

had no equal in English, nor seems likely to have. Our newspapers dismiss him with scanty notices; naturally enough, for they have been lauding Stevenson as the unrivaled literary colossus of the age. We are still in Lilliput, when such opinions pass unchallenged, in Lilliput, or possibly Cockayne.

This seems an epoch of second-rate intellects and of national backsliding. — Witness our onslaught on Spaniards and Filipinos and your British bullying of the Boers. If we are brought up from childhood to admire the gallant resistance which these Boers' ancestors made against the aggression of Philip II, how can we sympathize with the British aggressors now? I know not how you regard this business, but to me it is very deplorable. Governments, as I see it, are controlled by politicians with low motives, and not by statesmen.

I have written more than I intended — writing being much easier for me than a year ago, when I sent my first letter to you. Many thanks for your good wishes for the Cavour biography: I shall hardly be strong enough for that before next year. . . .

To Countess Cesaresco

CAMBRIDGE, 15 *March*, 1901

MY DEAR MADAM:

I must apologize for not replying sooner to your two very kind letters and card. I waited, at your suggestion, to see Mr. Frederic Harrison. He came to Cambridge and delivered a very heavy lecture on King Alfred; and then we went to Professor C. E. Norton's to a reception in his honor. There I had barely time to begin a talk with him when other persons were brought up to be introduced, and that completed our intercourse. He staid in Cam-

bridge only a couple of days, and was so constantly taken up with sight-seeing, that I could not arrange for a quiet half hour with him. . . .

. . . I had this forenoon a very interesting talk with Prince Kropotkin, who is giving a course of lectures in Boston. He made me understand the theory of philosophic Anarchism better than I have done before, and is brimful of *Gemüthlichkeit.* A German professional looking man, not large, spectacled, with an immense rebellious beard which seems to grow straight out and only to be partly restrained by much buttoning of his coat. You look in vain at his features and into his eyes to see traces of the violent conspirator: his only explosions are those of courtesy — as when he insists on lighting his cigarette, instead of having you bother to hand him a match. We boxed the compass in our talk, and I found in him not only wide erudition (that I expected) but a much more rational (from my standpoint) view of social and political problems than he is generally credited with. He certainly is not Mazzini, but, at bottom, the same intense love of humanity and desire to see justice prevail characterize them both. . . .

To Countess Cesaresco

CAMBRIDGE, *Dec.* 26, 1901

MY DEAR MADAM:

. . . I am sending you a little biography of Grant, which may interest you as a specimen of the best work of a young group of biographical miniaturists who have sprung up here. The author, Owen Wister, is Fanny Kemble's grandson. He was at school and college with me, and has several talents, his real gift being music. But on Liszt's advice, he gave up music as a profession and took to the law,

which he practices in Philadelphia. But he has spent much of his time, like Roosevelt, on the Western frontiers, and has been very successful in describing the cow-boy and the ranchman in short stories after Bret Harte's fashion — Only, Wister is a generation later than Harte, with all that that means. His sketch of Grant has been highly praised here, and I think you will find it a marvel of compactness. To us Americans, he seems to have drawn a true portrait of a man about whom, until lately, feuds raged. Occasionally, Wister's style reminds one of a rapid-firing rifle; but on the whole, he has made language serve his purposes of swiftness, clearness, and condensation, with great skill.

Please accept the little book as a token of our best wishes for yourself and Count Cesaresco for the New Year.

I felt sure that you would agree as to the upshot of the Transvaal and Philippine wars. We Anglo-Saxons can hardly henceforth persuade our neighbors that we are either disinterested or honest. The moral sceptre, which belonged to us in the 19th century, has slipped from us; and I for one believe that it will never be recovered, so long as we commit and condone great political immoralities. . . .

To Countess Cesaresco

CAMBRIDGE, *Feb.* 9, 1902

. . . We have lately organized in Boston a Society for the Protection of Italian Immigrants, and we already have a fashionable Circolo Italiano, which meets once a month and listens to papers — in Italian — on historical, literary or social topics concerning *il bel paese dove il sì suona.* Add to this a Dante Society, which has had Longfellow and Lowell, and now has Mr. Norton, at its head, and which

has made some excellent contributions to Dantean 'literature,' and you will see that, altho' we lovers of Italian are few numerically, we are not indifferent.

. . . Greatly do I wish that you would visit Boston and Cambridge! You could count on a cordial welcome, and you could not fail to be interested by the amazing material vigor of this country. We have literally harnessed Niagara, and things seem to rush ahead at Niagara's pace. And yet all is not at the level of things — there are thoughts, too, much earnestness, and more persons actively busy in improving the lot of their fellowmen than ever before. Only, the thinking and the earnest endeavor are mostly done in quiet, with no heralding by fanfare, and no newspaper 'booming' — as they always are done.

In this University you would find, I think, a few scholars equal to any, and more real cosmopolitanism than probably exists in any other University; and still some provincialism and a strong local flavor. Next month, for instance, Prince Henry of Prussia is coming, and he will be the guest while here of — Prof. Münsterberg, a Jew from Danzig, and next to Wm. James, our leading psychologist.

Bret Harte I have never seen. So far as I remember, he has not been in Boston during the past twenty years, but has — like Henry James — practically expatriated himself. The younger men seem to have distanced him at writing short stories, but none of them except Kipling. . . ever won so immediate a success. Owen Wister, by the way, has been commissioned to write the life of Franklin for the English Men of Letters series.

I wish that we might hear that you are writing another book, for you are one of the few who can write a book. Your Cavour 'will not let me sleep' — not from envy, but from emulation. . . .

To Countess Cesaresco

CAMBRIDGE, *March* 16, 1902

... We have had Prince Henry of Prussia here, and when I saw him, I recalled your praise of his father. The Prince is manly, quite un-Prussian in graciousness, and cheerful under the almost killing burden which his State Department laid upon him. He was whisked from New York to Washington, to St. Louis, to Chicago, to Boston — some 5000 miles in ten days, with great banquets at least every three hours and deputations every twenty minutes. They made him do everything, except go over Niagara in a barrel. Here, Harvard created him a Doctor of Laws, and the students gave him a rousing reception after their own fashion; and tho' he seemed jaded, he still was unfailingly affable. One remark of his amused us much. Somebody asked him how he liked America. 'Oh, I'm having the time of my life!' he replied. 'Over there I don't count for much you know. They only use me to send to funerals.'

Let us hope that he took away with him some idea of the real strength of this nation — its material expansion is evident to anyone, but the deep spirit of the people escapes most foreigners. They are amused by our surface absurdities (and truly, angels must often weep at our follies), but beneath it all is a tenacity of purpose, a do-or-die quality, which would make us terrible in war. It is well that the European cabinets and rulers should understand this — especially the German — for since our unholy Jingoes have thrust us into world-politics — as they call it — there is greater risk of a clash. So I hope that Prince Henry will warn the Kaiser against deluding himself into thinking that we can be bullied or attacked with impunity, because our streets are not full of soldiers every day. I am

no boaster, and I repudiate much that our people do and say; but I am convinced that there is latent in our 80 millions a terrible energy such as the world has never seen before, and which in the interests of peace and civilization, Europe will do well not to arouse.

Ah, my Lady! how stupid — not to say brutish is war! . . .

To Countess Cesaresco

MAGNOLIA, MASS'TTS: *July* 28, 1902

. . . We have been amused and exasperated by Leslie Stephen's *George Eliot* — diabolically clever in damning her work while seeming to approach it with admiration. It has quite chilled me towards Stephen, for whom and John Morley I have had very high esteem. But I have felt more and more the lack in Stephen of any generous recognition of the genius of his great contemporaries. His essays on Tennyson, Arnold, Carlyle, even Lowell, and now George Eliot, seem to steal their greatness away from them by some apparently innocent thrust, and by discussing only their defects. Very different was his treatment of Swift and Johnson and Gibbon, and even of 'Single Epigram' Broome.

Mention of Lowell and Stephen reminds me that one of the dreariest half-hours I ever spent was with these two men. Lowell I had had as a teacher in Dante and Cervantes, and he invited me to a party at Elmwood. A few days later, when I went to pay my respects, I found him and Stephen together — Lowell in one of his taciturn moods, Stephen apparently struck dumb, and both undisguisedly bored by the coming of the young man who wished nothing so much as to be out of reach of both of them. Such are celebrities — or, at least, such was Lowell,

when he was too lazy to be polite. The contrast was all the greater, when you had been accustomed to meet him twice a week in his lecture room and to find him always entertaining and often almost cordial. He had, to make you as uncomfortable as possible, high, upright, old-fashioned chairs, on which his guests were pilloried, whilst he lounged in a reclining chair and smoked his pipe. . . .

To Countess Cesaresco

CAMBRIDGE, *Nov.* 9, 1902

MY DEAR COUNTESS:

Let me thank you for the Magazine, containing your paper on Vittoria Accoramboni.[1] I read it with all the more interest because for a good many years John Webster has been one of my hobbies — if I may take such a liberty with such a mighty man — and I never suspected that your *palazzo* was once dwelt in by the White Devil. You have certainly rehabilitated her, in my judgment, so that henceforth the fearful heroine of the play will not be *she*. What a wonderful fellow Webster was! Where, out of Shakespeare will you find such a woman as the Duchess of Malfy? — and I doubt whether in Shakespeare himself you will find villains of the Renaissance type quite so real as the Cardinal. . . .

. . . I trust that your Congress of Orientalists was satisfactory. Last week we had a genuine bit of the far Orient here — the Crown Prince of Siam, a dapper, lemon-cheeked, mannerly young fellow, who is making the grand

[1] The home of Countess Cesaresco is on Lake Garda, near Salò, in the old palace of the Martinengo family. One of the occupants of the palace in the past was Vittoria Accoramboni, the maligned heroine of John Webster's *The White Devil*. The article referred to is to be found in Cesaresco, *Lombard Studies*, pp. 131–59.

tour, and has at least learned the names of the cigarettes and champagnes most in favor among us civilized Occidentals.

I am going on slowly with my little sketch of Venice.[1] The narration has come down beyond the League of Cambrai and the great catastrophe, after which the Republic slowly declined, much as Methuselah, I suppose, waned during the last century or two of his hale old age. Whether I print the sketch or not — I can't tell yet how bad it really is — it will always be a satisfaction to have written it: for I have seen at close range, as I should hardly have done otherwise, the most remarkable of all political organisms, and a people unfailingly interesting, full of surprises and not without paradoxes — the only people who have thus far succeeded in uniting immense commercial activity with beauty. Ah, Venezia! 'riccha, saggia, signorile,' as the old rhyme has it!

To Charles Eliot Norton

CAMBRIDGE, *Nov.* 16, 1902

DEAR MR. NORTON:

By my calendar, this is your seventy-fifth birthday, and I hope that you will let me, in congratulating you, thank you for all you have been to at least one of your younger friends. Among all that Harvard did for me, your friendly interest, your teaching, your example, have counted for most with me. And I am only one of the score and hundreds for whom you have done so much. Scattered up and down the world today, tho' they hold very varied views and pursue different paths, yet they all agree in looking back to you as the benefactor through whom they learned *come l'uom s'eterna* — that knowledge which is hidden in

[1] Begun in 1901, but not completed until 1905, owing to poor health.

the books of the masters but never vitalizes new lives except through some living exemplar. No other personal gift is so precious as this, and you have bestowed it royally.

Long may you have health to continue your work! The wishes of a whole generation of Harvard men, and of many others, attend you and always will.

Ever, in gratitude and affection, yours

Wm. R. Thayer

In 1903 Thayer made a trip to Italy, primarily for the purpose of attending the Second International Congress of Historical Sciences in Rome. President Eliot had asked him to represent Harvard University on that occasion. He also represented the Massachusetts Historical Society and the American Historical Association and was appointed by Secretary Hay to represent the government of the United States. He and Mrs. Thayer and their six year old daughter sailed from Boston on the *New England* of the Dominion Line on February 28th and reached Rome on March 15th.

A few extracts from the diary which he kept during the trip may serve to revive a little the impressions and experiences of these crowded weeks.

Thus, as he wanders through the familiar streets Thayer notices certain changes, since his last visit, in the outer aspect of the city that is said to be eternal:

'Then we drove up past S. Pietro in Montorio to the beautiful Passeggiata Margherita, new to me, on the crown of which is a piazza. Here is the colossal statue of Garibaldi, by Gallori. He is on horseback, in his characteristic uniform. Round the pedestal, two battle groups; and two allegorical groups — Rome, 1849, — Calatafimi, 1860, — America, — Europe. Garibaldi and horse are

imposing, if only from their size; they stand on so high a pedestal that one can hardly get a satisfactory view of them without going so far away that it is impossible to study the details.

'The view of Rome from here is magnificent. And yet I had rather look down from the Colle on Giotto's tower than on all these monuments of papal and modern Rome. St. Peter's shows grandly from here, and the Vatican Garden, rather barren, is clearly seen. We passed much of the old brick city-wall, which Garibaldi had to defend. Came back past Tasso's tree, St. Onofrio and Ponte St. Angelo. That Garibaldi should have such a monument in that place is one of the noblest of Time's revenges. Cavour has not yet been remembered, except by a second rate street, in Rome.'

Thayer soon discovered his error in thinking that Cavour had not been remembered as the following entry in his diary shows:

'We drove thence to the Cavour statue — I thought none had been raised in Rome to him — which is placed in Piazza Cavour, opposite the Palace of Justice. Colossal in size — not more impressive than a giant pumpkin. The tails of C.'s coat are big enough to serve as sails for a small yacht. No portrait statue ought to be so large as to lose its *portrait* character. At the base, bronze figures of a nude man brandishing a sword (Action), and of another, of somewhat Michelangelesque form, gazing at the ground (Thought). Galletti was the sculptor — "idèo e fece"; unveiled in 1895.'

Still another modern memorial arrested his attention, Ettore Ferrari's noble statue of Giordano Bruno. 'The finest recent monument I have seen. To the imagination it speaks more impressively than any other in Rome. The

inscription has a fine restraint, unusual here, where adjectives vitiate. "The century which he looked forward to raises this monument to Giordano Bruno on the spot where he was burned." What a revenge! . . . And the whole papal machine running full time at the Vatican, and in the Cancelleria even, at only a stone's throw from the statue. . . . Round its pedestal are medallions with heads of Sarpi, Campanella, Ramus, Vanini, Palearius, Servetus, Wiclif, and Huss. Three bas-reliefs represent Bruno teaching; at the end of his trial, when he uttered his unforgettable — "Perchance I hear this sentence with less fear than you pronounce it"; and his execution at the stake. The monument was erected in 1889.'

Of St. Peter's, the same as always, the following comment: 'At 11, all drove down to St. Peter's, and walked through it. The massiveness, rather than the magnitude of the interior, impressed me. Not a sign to indicate that the Holy Ghost has ever been in it. From floor to dome, a monument to the vainglory and pride of worldly ecclesiastics.' . . .

Thayer had come to attend a congress, the International Congress of Historical Sciences.[1] This is his description of its opening session:

'*April* 2. Beautiful day. Up early and put on evening dress. A little before 9, Countess Martinengo came in a landau to take us to the Campidoglio. . . . She told us that she was married in the Campidoglio. . . . We went into the great hall, already more than half full, and then separated, they having seats among the ladies behind, and I a seat among the government delegates in the second row. At

[1] The Congress was attended by over 1800 delegates from eighteen different countries. Thayer was the only American to be on its programme. He wrote an account of the Congress for *The Nation*, May 7, 1903.

9.30 promptly, King and Queen entered; he small, almost insignificant, except for dignity of manner; she, large, attractive in features, bright black eyes. Prince Prospero Colonna, Sindaco of Rome — a superb physique — made the opening address; followed by Nasi, Minister of Public Instruction — ordinary, clerk features; and finally by tiny Villari — barely five feet tall, pallid as ivory, large-nosed, bags under the eyes, veins meandering over his temples, white beard — who spoke 40 minutes; a speech full of pith. During the speaking some German delegates, who came too late, banged the knocker of the great door and caused some excitement inside. True Borussian manners!

'After the King and Queen left, the delegates passed through the Royal entrance. I joined Frederic Harrison, and we crossed the Piazza to the Palace of the Senators. . . .'

Thus was the Congress started, and then through a week or more it ran its course. Thayer himself at one of its sessions read a paper in Italian on 'Biography.' Some of the sessions were interesting, some were otherwise. But luncheons and dinners, official and unofficial, supplemented happily these stated functions, giving frequent opportunities to meet this man and that and to engage in entertaining or futile conversation. At a dinner given by the King at the Quirinal in honor of the Congress, while the guests were awaiting the sovereigns, Thayer talked with Bryce and Frederic Harrison: 'King and Queen soon appeared; latter attended by Countess Guicciardini and Princess de Vivaro. A few minutes later they went to the dining room and we followed. Magnificent room — mirrors, gold panels, red brocade: larger than living room of Harvard Union. Beautiful flower decorations. Innumer-

able lacquais in red or black; powdered hair. I sat next to Comparetti — the man I most wished to see — and E. Blok, the Dutch historian. Talked to both — both speaking English, C. well, B. with difficult pronunciation. . . . Talked about education in Italy — archæological work in Crete — Orsi's in Sicily. Much about C. G. Leland, lately dead in Florence, who asked Comparetti to introduce him to all the witches there. C. spoke pleasantly of our recent advance in scholarship. I asked him whether he wouldn't come to America to lecture? No — afraid of seasickness.

'Blok told me about life in Holland — simple scale on which the Leydeners live. His history of Holland — condensed in English translation by Miss Putnam. F. Harrison's "William the Silent" a good solid book. . . .'

Another incident of this visit to Rome is thus described:

'*April* 26. After luncheon drove to the Chamber of Deputies, and had an interview, by appointment, with Giuseppe Biancheri, the President, who recently celebrated 50 years' service in the Chamber. He is now 83: a small, compact man, with whitish hair and side whiskers, affable and talkative. Thanked me in the name of his country and the Chamber for my interest in Italy (of which he had not heard, till I wrote him yesterday). Discussed European politics. Then I brought him round to Cavour. C., he said, never took notes. "I asked him once how it was." C. replied, "The points which impress me in other men's speeches I can't forget. I rise early — at half past four or five, and walk to and fro in my room saying aloud what I intend to reply — and so the material takes its shape." The last years, the Chamber used to listen to C. "religiosamenti." Only once, in the Garibaldi episode, did C. lose self-control. When accused by G. of betraying his country, C. pounded on his desk and shouted, "What, I

a traitor! I, who have made Italy!" Brofferio was poetic, brilliant as a speaker, but after he had done, nobody remembered what he had said. C. never paid attention to him. Valerio was a man of larger calibre and influence. I asked about Rattazzi's papers. Pres. B. didn't know where they were. Described the night of Rattazzi's death, when he, as Prest. of the Chamber, went out to wait for the end. . . .'

The King, Victor Emanuel III, sent for Thayer for a private interview. The following is the latter's account of this event.

'*April* 24. Fine morning. Cold better. Just before 10, dressed in frock coat, white silk cravat, new beaver and yellow gloves — with the other ordinary apparel — drove in *coupé* to the Quirinal. Admission by small entrance on Via Venti Settembre, which leads to the carriage drive along the entire inside wall of the Palace. Got out at *porte cochère* at the west end; flunkey in red coat and purple plush knee breeches preceded me up stairs, to cloak room, where two others seized my coat, hat and umbrella. These ushered me into an anteroom, where an officer received me. We talked about 15 minutes — he had been at New York in 1892 and Chicago in 1893. Then through another small parlor, the doors of which were opened by an officer, and after I had bowed, the King came forward, shook hands and led me to the other side of the room. He pounced onto a damask-covered sofa, which was so broad and high that his feet didn't hang over, but projected out horizontally. I sat in a damask and gold armchair within a yard of him. He was very affable, alert-minded, apparently frank, and never lost the semblance of being interested. He began point-blank: "Where do you come from? What have you done?" When I told him that I had written the "Dawn,"

he said he recalled having read it, but didn't associate it with any name — "You Americans have so many names." Where had I learned Italian? After a few minutes, he turned from Italian to English, which he speaks easily, with copious vocabulary and good accent. I praised Meyer. He said that he was excellent. Had been at Belgrade — difficult post: no means of bringing the Servians to terms — you can't blockade them. I said that Italy was much more fortunate in getting correct views of American public opinion than William had been through Holleben. "As to that," he said, with a pertinent look, as if he rather enjoyed the suggestion that William had been outdone, "I can't say."

'We talked about Cavour. He had learned what he could directly from C.'s contemporaries. Thought that C. was difficult, "sour," to get on with, unless he wanted some one to help, and then he was very gracious. I suggested that this might have been in the last years when strain and worry made him irritable. I mentioned Nigra — whom he spoke of very highly. He referred to Biancheri. C. was the greatest statesman of the last century except Napoleon: he did everything, without anything at the start. Italian immigration — great drain, nearly half a million last year. I said, they made excellent laborers, but that the *maffia* encouraged violent crimes among themselves. "There is no *maffia:* I don't believe it — no societies. There may be bullies, braves, who impose on the weak ones." I urged the importance of a complete friendly understanding between Italy and United States. "Our public opinion is, even for us, very hard to get at. Over here, there are political traditions." "Ah, public opinion — is hard to sound everywhere — the newspapers don't give it. Here, we have but one tradition — tolerance. All parties — the Pope too —

live together peaceably at Rome. My Minister of War is a Jew — what more could you say? The army, which elsewhere is supposed to be the most conservative part of the country, is not so here." I said that I wished that Catholics at a distance, in America for example, could know the true state of things: there they still vapored about the temporal power. "The temporal power — that is trash. How old are you?" — "Forty-four." "I am ten years younger. Well, our generation, which is now the ruling generation, does not remember the Pope as King. Every year, the number of our majority grows — that recollection fades out. Toleration — that is our tradition." "And when one sees statues to Garibaldi, Mazzini, and the other chief makers of Italy, rising in different parts of Rome, one has the finest proof of Italian Unity," said I. The King asked whether I had collected material on this trip. I said no; that I had most of the necessary printed material: I hoped to return to look at the collections of letters in private hands. "I have some letters of Cavour's to my grandfather," he said, "but I don't think there is anything important in them." I said that I had been put back five years by ill health. "Ah, five years at our age is nothing. Have you tried the typewriter? I learned to write in three or four days — slowly; and I have found it excellent as a change, a rest, after several hours' writing with the pen."

'Here he gave a little jump, which I understood to be the signal for going. As I rose, he stood up, shook hands cordially, and I sidled towards the door. Before I reached it, he said, "When you return to Rome, be sure to come to see me. *Buon viaggio!*" "Riverisco, Maestà!" The door opened and I was soon driving back to the hotel.'

In Rome Thayer several times saw Elihu Vedder, the American artist:

'*April* 28. After lunch, we went by appointment to Vedder's studio outside of Porta Pia. He received us very graciously. . . . He showed us drawings, sketches, models of fountains and bas-reliefs — that of History especially interesting. He has a vigorous imagination: thinks for himself — shows little trace of other men's influence. Talks poor — unrecognized — but let's leave it to time. Amusing account of his dealings with C. P. Huntington, the railroad millionaire, for whom he painted a ceiling. V. suggested that he should draw Fortune coming down a railroad track! etc. etc.'

Thayer saw the entry of Edward VII into Rome on April 27th — 'for Italy the most gratifying formality since the Italians came to Rome.' Edward was dressed 'in flaming red uniform, field marshal's, and white plumes.' . . . 'E. is very stout; beard so white as to be the most noticeable part of his face at a distance.' 'There was enthusiasm,' adds Thayer, 'but the Italians don't know how to cheer — nor indeed does any European crowd. A hundred Harvard college boys can produce more effect than a thousand of these — including the Britishers, whose "hooray! hooray! hooray! tiger!" is as watered pea soup to wine, compared with our college three-times-three.'

One of the pleasantest features for Thayer of this rapid trip to Rome was the opportunity it gave him to see much of Countess Martinengo Cesaresco whom he had not met before and 'of whom,' he says, 'we have become very fond. With all her intellectual vigor she is gentle, almost hesitating, in manner; very accessible to different points of view. She had Türr's photograph, and told us about him and Riciotti Garibaldi. Hoped soon to see us at Salò.'

Only too quickly did this pleasant and memorable excursion come to a close. On May 1st the return voyage was

begun on the *Prinzess Irene*, sailing from Naples, the sight again of which city prompted Thayer to consign the following comment to his journal:

'*April* 30. No other city by the sea, neither Palermo nor Genoa, nor Smyrna nor Athens, nor Constantinople, can approach Naples in beauty, whether of land or water. But for the city itself, I feel almost abhorrence. It is debasing to see the misery and degradation of this place, without being able to do anything to improve it — to get into the habit of accepting such sights as a matter of course. But what can the passing stranger do? To give *soldi* is no remedy. Life swarms here beyond the capacity of a thousand reforms to better it; and in the swarms, which remind me of flies buzzing aimlessly in a sunny corner, the individual counts for nothing. How can human beings have much respect for themselves or each other when they know nothing but filth? Wild beasts at least keep clean; but humans, when they huddle together, wallow in dirt.'

Every prospect pleases. Only man is vile. Glancing across the bay Thayer saw Capri where he had spent a happy, studious winter in 1877, preparing for college. 'Capri, dreamlike, floating on a sea which has the soft bloom of grapes; the Sorrentine mountains and Vesuvius likewise ethereal; even Posilippo, only a mile away, idealized by a faint haze. Capri is to me a casket in which a fragment of my youth — five months of intense, varied and fascinating life — is locked forever. . . .'

The voyage home inspired the following reflection: 'Seasickness is one of the meanest of the gratuitous humiliations which Nature heaps upon us.'

But when the waters were smooth, there were the resources of the spirit always ready to be called upon as the following extracts show:

'*May* 3. Fine; smooth again. Up to breakfast. Finished *Treasure Island*. An excellent piece of artificial work. But for all its artifice, — its perpetual striving after the right word, its careful imitation of buccaneer lingo — it doesn't hold a candle to *Robinson Crusoe*, which is so nonchalant, so spontaneous, so real. The wonder to me is that a fellow who could write as well as Stevenson wrote, should have been satisfied to spend his time on rum-swigging desperadoes: after all, they are small game, and there is an illusive ease in describing them. Jack boots and burnt cork, and plenty of swashbuckler attitudinizing suffice to resuscitate them in a book. But S. writes so well, in spite of his evident artfulness, that it is pleasant reading, and there are several capital strokes. . . .'

There was stiffer reading, too, to beguile the hours, such as Sorel's *Montesquieu* — 'A keen piece of dissection! How the French love formulas, and think life can be lived by formulas — until there comes a volcanic reaction against them, as in 1789, and they are blown to atoms! Unless you argue that 1789 and 1793 were after all but the application, with explosive results, of a different set of formulas.'

'Am now reading Bryce's new volume of Biographical Studies. The "Disraeli" and "Gladstone" are Plutarchian."

On the *Prinzess Irene* were Mr. Charles Francis Adams and his wife and daughter, returning from Egypt. Here was entertaining and stimulating companionship: 'Talked with Mr. Adams' is one entry. Another is 'Mr. Adams lent me a Boston *Transcript*. Roosevelt is "mentioned" for President of Harvard in 1909. Far enough ahead!' And still another is: 'Interesting talks with Mr. Adams. Joe Hooker, he thinks, was unfit to be more than general

of division. When commander-in-chief, his headquarters swarmed with prostitutes. Sickles would have been court-martialled for his inefficiency at the second day at Gettysburg, if he hadn't luckily lost his way. Story of Sherman, trying to find out his road from Georgian planter. *Planter* — "Tell me where you want to go, General, and I will tell you the way." Sherman beckons planter to him, and then explodes with, "I am going where I damn please."

Finally on May 13th the *Prinzess Irene* docked at Brooklyn. That evening at half-past nine 'we reached our dear old home.'

'So ends the "Roman Mission" — a memorable oasis in our lives.' — Such are the closing words of this compact and interesting diary.

Once at home, surrounded by his books and with spirits refreshed by his outing in his beloved Italy, with its many pleasant memories, Thayer renewed the current of his life. He was asked to edit the letters of John Fiske and devoted a considerable amount of time to going through the material, but in the end he abandoned the enterprise and resumed his congenial studies in Italian history. His zest and capacity for work came back in gradually increasing measure, and he dared to think of the future with greater optimism than had been his wont during the recent past. He even planned to return before long to Italy to push still further his search for materials, his preparation, for the long-projected, constantly deferred biography of Cavour.

A friendship which Mr. Thayer's marriage brought to him was that with Mrs. William E. Russell, wife of the then Democratic Governor of Massachusetts. Mrs. Russell, *née* Margaret Manning Swan, had been Elizabeth Ware's closest friend since the earliest days of childhood.

They had grown up together in Cambridge and a thousand ties of memory united them. When a daughter was born to the Thayers, she was named after Mrs. Russell.

This friendship William Thayer inherited with his marriage and the years only confirmed and strengthened it. Governor Russell died in 1896 and in 1905 Mrs. Russell married Dr. George Michael Foster of London. Thayer's correspondence with her at various times was much the fullest and most intimate of his life.

To Mrs. William E. Russell

HOTEL ALBRACCA
YORK HARBOR, MAINE: *July* 22, 1904

DEAR MARGARET:

Many happy returns of that birthday of yours, which need only serve to convince you that you have reached the Age of Perpetual Youth. 'Time writes no wrinkles on thine *azure* brow' — as Byron very confidently assured the Ocean — for the very good reason that you haven't one. After all, what a strange experience life is — so strange, that I spend half of my time wondering at its strangeness, when I ought to be doing something more useful. I wonder, too, how many persons are constituted as I am, to see a great ? stamped on everything, from weeds to stars?

But I won't moralize, or you will certainly be justified in reading no further. And then, one can hardly be in earnest without being suspected of dyspepsia or pessimism, and that's an uncomfortable imputation to struggle under.

Life here goes smoothly on, pleasanter even than last year. Our old Philadelphia crony, Miss Cash, has come back, and she beats all the younger women in unfailing entertainingness. (Please look in your Swiss dictionary and

see if there is such a word.) We have swapped stories, as you always do at the beginning of the season, and she has a great stock of good ones. What could be better than this, for instance, which happened to a friend of hers?

A mother puts her small daughter to bed and tells her that she must not be afraid, as nothing can hurt her: for the room is full of angels who will look after her. The mother has hardly got down stairs before the little one calls out, 'It beats me, mama, how scared I am of angels!'

A small boy, whose mother was going to have a dinner party, was assured by her that everything would be all right, as God would watch over him. In the middle of the dinner, the small boy appeared in his nightie, and announced emphatically, 'God or no God, I'm scared.' . . .

. . . Miss Cash herself, with the face of Julius Cæsar, and a decisive manner, is interesting irrespective of her stories. She takes a Melancholy Jacques view of life, is a mingling of humor and seriousness, which makes her an unfailingly entertaining companion. And she can blot out persons whom she doesn't like in a very swift, final way. But after all, it's impossible to give much idea of strangers by letter. . . .

. . . I have been thinking much of you and of Will this past fortnight. What a glorious thing it is to be remembered, as he is remembered, so that at a national crisis men of very different opinions agree in saying, 'If Russell were here, he would be our choice.' I have heard that often, and every time I hear it I feel that, whether one die young or old, that is the finest thing that can be thought and said.

You have doubtless heard that Judge Parker was nominated by the Democrats, that he sent a dramatic telegram to the convention, insisting on the gold standard as unchangeable, and that by so doing he has made his election

seem possible. If we can only put together a sane and courageous opposition, we shall be in a fair way to reform some of the crying public evils: but the task is like making ropes of sand. . . .

CHAPTER V

THE WRITING OF 'CAVOUR'

1905–1911

THE period of illness and of partial incapacity for work was a long one, and most trying. But it gradually drew to a close and scholarly activities were resumed little by little. Finally Thayer found it possible to take up the great task which had been in his mind for years, which had been begun and had been cruelly interrupted, the *Life and Times of Cavour*. But before that, the *Short History of Venice*, begun in 1901 and published in 1905, was an evidence of returning health and also a contribution toward it, and the favor with which the book was received was a welcome encouragement as the following letter to John T. Morse, Jr., Editor of the *American Statesmen Series* and author of several of its volumes, shows:

To John T. Morse, Jr.

MAGNOLIA, MASS., *June* 18, 1905

MY DEAR MR. MORSE:

. . . I need not tell you that your approval of my 'Venice' is very gratifying. Most of the book was written under such conditions of invalidism that I often wondered whether it would come to anything. I am particularly glad to have your favorable verdict, because you are almost the only historian in America with experience, both personal and editorial, in *constructive* historical writing. Most of our contemporaries seem to go on the theory that one has only to ply shovel and pitch-fork with might and main in order to produce a 'history.' But I think the tide is

turning, and we may hope soon that to be readable will not be imputed as a crime.

If I have succeeded in dispelling some of the ancient calumnies about Venice, I shall be well repaid. But after all, the historian gets his compensation in his work, which makes him the familiar of great men and great issues. If in addition, there comes the approbation *di color che sanno*, he is indeed fortunate.

Thanking you again

I am faithfully yours

WM. R. THAYER

As has been already indicated Thayer's first interest in literature was poetry and his first book was a book of poems. By 1905 he had published three small volumes of verse. His feeling that poetical expression was the highest literary art dated at least from his college days and lasted through life. It was given utterance in several letters to Mr. Harry L. Koopman, of Brown University, one of which follows:

To Harry L. Koopman

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *March* 10, 1907

DEAR MR. KOOPMAN:

A day or two ago I was about to drop the *Pathfinder* into my basket — as one of the things that don't have to be read and so can be honestly disregarded — when my eyes caught the title of your article.[1] I read that, I assure you, with mingled gratitude, elation and sadness. My poetry

[1] *The Poetry of William Roscoe Thayer*, by Harry Lyman Koopman, in *The Pathfinder*, March, 1907. Mr. Koopman said: 'The poems make clear that Thayer belongs among those who hold that poetry should be the offspring of thought and emotion, not of emotion and words. . . . Mr. Thayer is now, in the prime of his powers, squandering on prose — though few can write it better — the talent that should be given to poetry, which how few can write so well!'

has always been the very heart of myself — the heart which, by a paradox, one does not shrink from revealing by poem to all the world, tho' we would shrink from revealing it to intimate friends in daily life. It has been very generally neglected, in spite of the good words of a few men whose favor is supposed to carry weight, and the willingness of editors to print it (when the piece is not too long). Judge of my surprise and pleasure, therefore, when I read your words. It was like having my vanished youth suddenly brought back.

'And there comes in the sadness: for you remind me — what in my heart of hearts I have always felt — that I ought to have devoted all my energy to Poetry. I made a struggle for it, but the combination of ill health and lack of means drove me back to prose. I could have endured the neglect of the public, but I couldn't live without bread and butter, and, having married, my first duty was not to myself — not even to the imperious and enchanting Muse.

. . . As my health declined I turned for self-preservation to tasks in which at least I could escape from the sickly subjective self. Then ten years ago I quite broke down, and for five or six years I could hardly carry such slight routine work as editing the *Graduates' Magazine*. If you have ever been nervously ill (I hope you have not) you will remember that the concentration required for making a couplet is almost crazing when the nerves are at war. Gradually, however, I have got back my strength, and by working short stints I go ahead fairly well in prose; and during the past year or two I have written several poems — such as they are.

'But when Youth — the Dream — departs
It takes something from our hearts,
And it never comes again.'

I hope that I may yet be able, if my life is spared ten years, to write a few poems which may be worthy. The worst curse of nervous illness is not the actual suffering, but the daily proof it seems to force on you that mind and spirit are merely the slaves of body. Materialism taunts scornfully your baffled Idealism. The great Doubt fastens on your heart. I resolved long ago that so far as I could I would give this morbid state no voice: for it has inspired too much of our literature for nearly a century. At the best, life is sad enough — why add to its sadness? or, rather, to its sickliness? The Tragic has a tonic effect — the Morbid should not be tolerated. That, in a nutshell, is the judgment I have passed on myself, and tried to obey, for a good while past: and the result is that personal utterance — the indispensable basis of true lyrics — has been almost silenced. For I have never been able to write a stanza or a line which I did not feel, and feel to be true. Perhaps sincerity is the only quality that belongs to all my work — and that does not make one a poet now-a-days.

Excuse this egotism. You wrote of me so nobly that I wish you to know that my apparent desertion of poetry was not due to disgust at lack of appreciation, but to a temperamental physical defect, which has forced me for nearly twenty years to make the best of half a loaf — Prose.

I hope that you still find time for composition. However you may be hampered otherwise, you don't betray morbidness. After all, as you, and I and everyone else knows who ever wrote a rhyme in dead earnest, the joy of writing surpasses all other intellectual delights, and is its own reward. The applause of the public unquestionably helps, more or less according to one's nature, but it is never indispensable.

I was very sorry to miss your call a fortnight ago. When you come to Boston again, won't you let me know beforehand, so that we can arrange to meet and talk?

Ever, with renewed thanks for your kindness to my Vanished Poet.

Faithfully yours

Wm. R. Thayer

Letters to Percy Mackaye and to Harrison S. Morris contain references to this thought, always so dominant with Thayer, as well as to other topics:

To Percy Mackaye

Annisquam, *July* 1,1908

I am very much obliged to you for sending the Poem. I was intending to write you. We have seldom printed the Phi Beta Kappa Poem, because they are usually too long and are written by men who have not the slightest poetical equipment.

May I take this opportunity to say — not as editor, but as one who knows that Poetry is the most precious of all human products — that it is a great satisfaction to watch your devotion to this high calling? One poet may redeem a generation. Go on — and prosper!

To Harrison S. Morris

Magnolia, Mass., *May* 25, 1908

...I was glad to hear that the benefactor who had offered a chemical laboratory to Harvard is your father-in-law, Mr. Wharton. It must be an immense satisfaction to set in motion wheels of investigation which may revolutionize man's knowledge of life, and at least enable him to conquer more difficulties and to live more happily.

I envy Mr. Wharton the ability to do this, and it must add greatly to his pleasure to know that in this benefaction he is giving broader scope to the genius of Professor Theodore Richards, our most eminent American scientist and a most charming man, to boot.

'Charming' reminds me of Stedman,[1] whose death I have been regretting, though the manner of it is what I wish the gods would allot to me. What a friendly soul his was! How true his character! How clear his mind! And I suppose that you — like me and scores of other versifiers — are grateful to him for his hospitable welcome of our early ventures. Few established critics dare risk their reputation in that way: but he had no fear. . . .

During several years Thayer was brought into close relations with Charles Francis Adams, who was President of the Harvard Graduates' Magazine Association, an organization which stood behind the *Magazine*, and who was also President of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

To Charles Francis Adams

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *Jan.* 26, 1905

MY DEAR MR. ADAMS:

It recently became known to a few persons here that Professor Norton, realizing that his library and works of art would have to be sold after his death, had decided to dispose of them during his lifetime. The very thought of his being deprived of his books has led a few of us to take steps to prevent it. Professors Archie Coolidge and Schofield and Miss Irwin constituted themselves an informal com-

[1] Stedman had been one of the first to notice Thayer's poetical work and to speak appreciatively of it. See *Poets of America* (1887), p. 443: 'The young author of *Hermes* seems to have good service within his power.'

mittee and Gardiner M. Lane is treasurer of a fund to purchase the library. Mr. Lane, the College Librarian, found that Mr. Norton would be glad — and greatly relieved — to have his books go *en bloc* to the Harvard Library. They have appraised them at $15,000 and we are now engaged in a 'still hunt' to raise that sum: $9000 has been subscribed in a very short time, viz. one subscription of $2500, one of $2000, and three of $1000, with smaller sums for the balance.

Believing that you would regret not being given an opportunity to join in this tribute to one whom Harvard and the country has the greatest reason for honoring, I send you this note. The books will of course stay in Mr. Norton's library till he dies, and then come to the College, to form a memorial of him, along with the collections of Lowell and Child.

If Mr. Moorfield Storey is within reach, will you kindly tell him of the project, as he too may like to join in the subscription? There has been no public announcement, but we wish the project to be passed on privately to any persons who are likely to be interested in it.

We rolled through the meeting of the Mass. Historical Society without you like a Dutch lugger in a ground swell. Gov. Long was elected: Don G. Hill nominated. . . .

To Charles Francis Adams

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *May* 18, 1905

In clearing up my desk, I came upon this item, which I meant to send you long ago. For compound errors, it beats the average journalistic statement all hollow. From this it appears that Harvard made you an LL.D. eleven years before you are to graduate from College, and that you were sixty-eight when you entered the Freshman Class.

How many ancient facts, accepted by historians without question, do you suppose are as reliable as this?

In the *Harvard Graduates' Magazine* for December, 1905, an article appeared eminently calculated to disturb violently the academic dove-cotes, if such existed. It was very critical of Yale and it was a shot heard, if not round the world, at least through wide and resonant spaces. The fact that it had its origin in a high dispute about athletics did not tend to diminish the excitement. Among other things the article said:

'Will the historian of American education, when he comes to write the history of the years from 1870 to 1906 be able to point to any single important contribution made by Yale to either educational or administrative progress? The adoption of the elective system, the development of post-graduate instruction, the establishment of the case-system in the study of law, the conversion of the professional schools into graduate schools — not one of these great reforms originated at Yale; and only tardily, with great reluctance, have some of them been partially adopted there. But that historian cannot fail to give Yale full credit for organizing and maintaining the most remarkable athletic system ever seen in an American or an English university. He may ask in vain for any conspicuous discovery in science, for any vital book, for any advance in educational method which Yale can claim in the past decade or two; but the modern game of football, developed by Mr. Walter Camp, is the one great contribution made at New Haven in recent years to the world's progress and the intellectual and spiritual uplift of mankind.' . . . 'Yale persistently opposed every attempt to curb, or regulate or purify athletics.'

This article created a fine flurry as the following letter shows:

To Charles Francis Adams

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *Dec.* 4, 1905

May I address you as President of the Graduates' Magazine Association, in regard to the much-discussed article which appears in this *Magazine?* Before accepting it, I took good advice — that of Mr. Norton among others — which all agreed that it ought to be printed. It represents the views of men who believe that the great obstacle to a permanent improvement in the tone of athletics, and in their subordination in the University, is Yale, which gives them a free rein. This view I believed deserved to be presented, even if, in presenting it, an anti-Yale criticism were involved. I put this article in the Graduate's Window, which, as every Harvard man should know, has been contributed to by various free lances, who expressed generally only their own opinions. To have asked the writer to sign it would have given it more weight, and so have seemed to justify the outcry that it is representative.

By a blunder at the Press, the *Magazine* did not come out on the day when the advance sheets were used by the papers, and this enabled the sensationalists to declare that the article was 'official.'

For several days, I was bombarded by demands to withdraw it from the *Magazine*. This I declined to do; first, because that would have been cowardly, as it would have implied that, after thumping Yale, we ran away; and, next, because I don't think that the Editor ought, at the request of one body of Harvard men, to suppress views which another body of equally loyal and thoughtful

Harvard men believe the *Magazine* ought to present. If I began that, where should we stop? There were plenty of men a year ago who would have gladly had me suppress your article on the Increase of Tuition — and so on.

I have had, of course, many protests, but I have had also hearty approval from some of our best men, professors, and others, old and young, here and in New York. So that I feel justified, however unpleasant a duty it has been: I remember ten years ago, or more, that you said the Editor of this *Magazine* must go ahead, showing neither fear nor favor, and I have tried to act accordingly. After nearly fourteen years' service, I am today the most unpopular Harvard man living, but I hope that, after the present excitement cools down, it will be recognized that I have tried to maintain a principle which is, in the long run, more important than any relations we may have with Yale.

May I count on you to tell me, a month or so hence, when quiet may be restored, whether you believe that it will be for the interest of the *Magazine* for me to resign? I will not resign as an acknowledgment that my present action was unjustified; but of course I should not care to go on if I were convinced that by so doing the usefulness of the *Magazine* might be impaired.

When I mentioned resigning to the Executive Committee of the *Magazine* — and again to Mr. Norton today — they laughed.

All this I report to you, because you have done much for the *Magazine* and are the official head of its association, and because I know that, whatever your views may be about that particular article, you believe in a free forum.

Mr. Adams certainly believed in a free forum. Indeed

only in such an environment, spacious and open to the heavens, could he himself move with comfort and satisfaction. This was the period when he was attacking various academic 'fetishes,' storming various citadels of complacency, summoning the walls of academic conservatism to fall at the sound of his trumpet blasts, which generally took the form of Phi Beta Kappa orations. Several of Thayer's letters refer to the discussions aroused by this incisive and intrepid critic. The first one concerns an address delivered by Mr. Adams at Columbia University at the Commencement of 1906, entitled 'Some Modern College Tendencies,' in which the speaker advocated the reorganization of Harvard University along English lines, splitting it up into colleges as at Oxford and Cambridge, and in which he also severely criticised the elective system.

To Charles Francis Adams

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *June* 14, 1906

After reading your *apologia* I feel that nothing commoner than Greek ought to be addressed to you. It is evident that you took for your text Iliad XV, 403-4. . . .

I think you have never written an oration more perpetually *alive* than this. As to your two suggestions, the splitting up of the College and the transformation of the Elective System, they have never been put more forcibly than by you. Just how far subdivision would help, seems to me very doubtful. If it had lain in our genius — as it has in the English — to develop in that way, we should have done so before now. But that we have not so developed, is not, of itself, a sufficient reason for not making the experiment.

Speaking generally, I believe that the Elective System

does vastly more good than harm. But, so far as I have observed, or have read the confessions of men of other times, there never has been a system which succeeded in discovering the capacity of each pupil and then in really educating it. The Elective System comes nearest. The Harvard men who have been educated under it and are now prominent, are, it seems to me, not inferior to a similar batch of men trained in Quincy's time. Of course, I am not arguing to defend the defects of one system or of another. I mean only to suggest that there are certain short-comings due to human nature, and not to any particular system — which seem to require that youth shall not properly use its opportunities for education, and that Age shall regret the 'wasted years.'

You have done a great service in forcing these topics to the front. I had not been in the College Yard three minutes this morning before one of our Greek Department hailed me with 'Have you seen Adams's recantation as to the fetish?'

To Charles Francis Adams

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *June* 28, 1906

Thank you for the correct copies of both speeches. You certainly deserved our gratitude yesterday for enlivening what was one of the dullest of Commencements. And at the Φ. B. K. Dinner today it was duller still. Except for Gov. Long, we had no mitigating moment of refreshment.

Let me wish you a prosperous summer abroad. We go to Italy early in September, and shall be absent till midwinter. Ever truly yours

WM. R. THAYER

[P.S.] Mr. Cunningham told me that you attended the

meeting of the Graduates' Magazine Association, and were anxious to hear how the *Magazine* weathered the storm last December. Only 14 persons have taken the 'silly method' — I quote Prest. Eliot — of expressing their disapproval by stopping their subscriptions. Meanwhile new ones have come in, and the prestige and influence of the *Magazine* were never greater than today. But the Editor is still looked at askance by some of our Harvard constituency. The article helped in many ways — perhaps in none more decisively than in proving that our Athletocracy is too formidable to be overcome at present.

. *To Charles Francis Adams*

York Harbor, Maine
Aug. 13, 1906

Your letter from Trondhjem came promptly, and I think I have been able to read it without flaw. Your page looks as regular and artistic as one of those Cufic manuscripts they used to exhibit at the Arab Library in Cairo.

There has been no further discussion in print — so far as I have seen — of your bombshell. The vindication of Dreyfus, baseball, yacht races, the row in Russia, and a few other minor topics have, for the moment, sent the problem of College education to the rear. The prevailing opinion among the Harvard men whom I have talked with is that you attacked a theory rather than a condition. They admit that the elective system is not perfect — that there are loafers and soft snaps — but the imperfections do not preponderate, and the proportion of fellows who glide through College and get their degrees with little work is smaller than it used to be — not larger, indeed, than the similar class at Oxford and Cambridge. The personal con-

tact between instructors and students was never so general as at present — etc., etc., etc.

A copy of the Class of 1856 Semi-Centennial Class Report came the other day,[1] and is very interesting — especially the contrasted portraits from then and now. I am struck by the mature appearance of your youths fifty years ago. You, for instance, might easily pass for thirty-five, with your stock and aplomb and idealist's eyes. No doubt you chuckle whenever you publicly announce that you don't believe in ideals. I should say that you believe in them so thoroughly that they have become, for you, identical with what you call plain matter-of-fact affairs.

Here's a side-light on the teaching of English that may amuse you. The ten-year-old boy of one of my Cambridge neighbors was fuming over his composition. His father suggested that it would be easy enough, if he would simply describe something he had seen. 'That won't do,' said the boy. 'The teacher told us to use figurative language.' 'What's that?' asked the father. 'Oh, that's where you call a rooster a *chandelier*.' . . .

In 1906 Mr. and Mrs. Thayer and their daughter Margaret made a trip to Europe. Sailing on the *Romanic* for Genoa on September 15th, they were gone four months, returning in January, 1907. Thayer was a delegate to the First Historical Congress of the Risorgimento which met at Milan and read a paper comparing Cavour and Bismarck.[2] While in Rome he sent the following letter to Mr. Adams:

[1] Mr. Adams was a member of the Class of 1856.

[2] *Bismarck e Cavour. Un Parallelo Storico*, Roma, 1906. Thayer wrote an account of this Congress for *The Nation* (December 13, 1906).

To Charles Francis Adams

PALACE HOTEL, VIA VENETO
ROME, 19, xii, 1906

I send a suggestion at long range — which is perhaps indiscreet — for the Mass. Hist. Society. Why would it not be proper to make either the February or the March meeting a sort of Commemoration of Longfellow? I have heard the plans of our Cambridge Society for celebrating his centennial, and I can easily imagine that there will be much notice taken of the occasion elsewhere: but all this does not seem to me to impose silence on the Mass. Hist. Soc. Longfellow was a member of the Society, and the papers or recollections that might be called out by our present members should have a peculiar value. There's no danger of our overdoing the Centennial celebrations, because there are very few of our associates who will be remembered on their hundredth birthdays. Such a meeting as I have in mind will give variety to our proceedings, which are — if it be not irreverent, Sir, to hint it — somewhat over busy with *borning* and burying members. After an associate has been dead 25 or 30 years, or longer, the Society can bring itself to listen to something more specific about him than is appropriate at the moment of his departure. *Nil nisi bonum* is a good motto by the open grave, but it can hardly be adopted by an historical society for all its activities. When Posterity — for which we are laying up so much work — looks at the Memoirs of the Mass. Hist. Soc., and learns from them what wise, learned, witty, and virtuous personages we all were, do you suppose it will believe everything?

I had a letter from Prof. Hart the other day telling of the election of Mark Howe—who ought to do good work —and of the excellent health of the Immovables who sit at

your table and obstruct progress. Shall I send you a consignment of the toy bombs which have recently been popular here to place under their curule chairs? The explosion is warranted to scare the occupant down three flights of stairs, but not to injure him. In this city, where popes begin their career at 68 and live till 93, one learns that old age is only a relative term, so that the Society's Immovables may put off your reform till 1920.

Mr. Rhodes is our neighbor at the Hotel Excelsior, and I have not seen him so well in a long time. He is working up the archæology of old Rome with the enthusiasm of an intelligent young graduate who has no streak of pedantry in him. He even talks of more volumes of history. Bliss Perry has been another neighbor. He too shows the good effects of publishing a book and taking a holiday.

Events in Europe are wonderfully interesting just now. The Vatican has had the folly to declare war on the French Republic: the German Reichstag seems at last to have shied at William's autocracy; the shovel-hatted and strawberry-leaved peers in England are reaching an irreconcilable stage with the Commons; Russia welters in panic and anarchy; there is the Japanese Question — a very serious one — at home, and I believe that the Harvard Overseers, like a collective infant Hercules, are trying to strangle the serpent of Athleticism. As to this last, however, the European papers — doubtless paid to keep quiet — are silent.

We have had a most successful trip, which is near its close, as we sail for home on Jan. 12th. I have seen many interesting men, who could throw light on my period, and have collected much material. I sent you a memoir which I presented at the Milan Congress. It was so well-received that, in response to various requests, I had it printed, al-

tho' it was written without my books and is avowedly only an outline. When porcupines meet, they throw a quill or two at each other by way of salutation: so here, when *dotti* of any species are introduced, they toss pamphlets at each other. So my memoir serves a double purpose. . . .

To Charles Francis Adams

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *Dec.* 19, 1907

DEAR MR. ADAMS:

Thank you for your letter, which interested me greatly. I cannot undertake to discuss the Elective System by letter — as that would be beyond my scope at present, when I am finishing some things that have to be done before I go to Philadelphia for a week. Your description of Pres[t] Eliot is certainly vivid, and it may help his biographer some day or other to complete a portrait of him.

My article (which I wrote reluctantly) dealt only incidentally with the Elective System.[1] I wished to bring into the foreground several important points that are usually overlooked. For instance: (1) that numbers, much more than the Elective System, account for the social situation at Harvard; (2) that other colleges are suffering from similar difficulties; (3) that since Cotton Mather's time (and earlier) many good persons have always been sure that Harvard was tottering on the brink of Hell; (4) that the only Germanization here is simply indispensable to any institution that pretends to use the modern scholars' tools; (5) that the Oxford College system will never do here, because it is based on different social ideals — it is a medieval survival, the American universities have devel-

[1] An article on 'Germanization, Oxfordization, and Critics.' *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, December, 1907, pp. 275–288.

oped according to racial and geographical needs; (6) that the 'good old times' when required studies prevailed did not turn out only paragons of scholarship; &c., &c., &c., &c.

I should not agree with you that we have made the *descensus Averni*. On the contrary, I think that Harvard has made a long stride up from the outgrown system of your youth, towards a better system than prevails now, or has ever prevailed over here. One point is constantly forgotten: that whereas, 50 years ago, the Senior of 19 or 20 years of age was deemed mature enough to choose his life's work, now the Freshman of 19 or 20 is declared by the critics of the Elective System to be unfit to choose his studies for the ensuing year. Perhaps he isn't, but the contrast strikes me as suspicious.

Please do not talk, Mr. Adams, of being old, or growing old, or expecting that this or that will be accomplished 'after you are gone.' Until you *do* show signs of feebleness or lack of energy, I wish to think of you as one of the few sources of courage, inexhaustible freshness and suggestion we have to draw upon.

Ever faithfully yours

Wm. R. Thayer

P.S. You may be interested to hear that I had a note from Goldwin Smith, who entirely endorses my remarks on Oxfordization.

To Charles Francis Adams

Cambridge: *Oct.* 14/08

Of course I hope that Pres. Eliot and the University will take up the Milton celebration and that *Comus* or *Samson Agonistes* may be performed: but in case the Commemoration resolves itself into an address — either in Sanders

Theatre or before the Mass. Hist. Society — I suggest that Dr. George Gordon is the best choice for orator.

Dr. Everett[1] is not a Puritan — but it is precisely the Puritan side of Milton which ought to be chiefly emphasized now, when it is the fashion to sneer at the Puritans as narrow. In truth, however, in Milton's Puritanism lie the seeds of those broad ideals of Liberty which have been till recently the very soul of the American Commonwealth. By all means, therefore, get some one who sees, and sympathizes with, this representative and essential part of Milton's character and doctrine.

Anyone who has heard Dr. Everett sneer at Emerson — who was of the true Miltonian breed — can't suspect him of valuing at its proper worth the side that I refer to. Dr. Everett is always amusing, and he would doubtless give us an interesting literary performance: but even here, his literary criticism is of ante-bellum vintage. He belongs to the critics who 'formed themselves' on Jeffrey, Macaulay, Gifford and those earlier men of the Quarterlies. I have never seen a trace in him of acquaintance with the great French critics of literature, from Sainte-Beuve through Taine down to Brunetière, Faguet and the moderns, or with the great Englishmen, from Arnold to Morley. I had pretty good means of judging, because I helped him considerably in his Lowell Institute Lectures on the Italian Poets, and was astonished to find that he was still at the stage where the critic declares, with perfect aplomb, 'What I like is good! What I don't like is bad!'

So I plead for a Puritan interpretation of Milton, if you can't secure the larger program.

[1] William Everett (1839–1910), Harvard '59; son of Edward Everett. Head Master of Adams Academy in Quincy. Teacher, scholar, man of letters, politician.

I don't mean to disparage Dr. Everett. I would go far to hear him translate Virgil or enthuse over Catullus, but I don't see any fitness in him for an oration in Milton.[1]

Somebody said at the Society the other afternoon that probably Milton was not much read in 17th Century Massachusetts. I can't cite references, but I feel sure that our Puritan leaders, after 1650, were saturated with the doctrines set forth in his prose tracts.

To Charles Francis Adams

CAMBRIDGE: *Nov.* 29/08

I am very much obliged for your note. Of course, Lincoln is too far away for social engagements, but I am glad that Sig. Ferrero saw you.[2] He is open-minded and perspicacious to a degree I have seen in no other foreigner newly arrived, and his stay here has revealed to him a side of American life which, he says, they never hear of in Europe. When I told him about the Adamses he was astonished at the persistence of superiority which can't be found in so many successive generations of European princes. Well — as I know about princes — I should say, 'hardly.'

I hope that his coming is going to set an example of better historical writing over here, where our Universities are still mostly worshipping the German sawdust idol. For artistic construction his Lowell Lectures have been very remarkable.

[1] Mr. Everett was, nevertheless, chosen to make the address for the tercentenary anniversary of the birth of John Milton, celebrated in Boston under the auspices of the Massachusetts Historical Society in December, 1908. Everett had ten years earlier delivered a course of lectures on Milton before the Lowell Institute.

[2] When Ferrero was in Cambridge he was the guest of Mr. Thayer, who was instrumental in securing for him an opportunity to lecture at Cornell, and to be received at the White House as the guest of President Roosevelt.

To Charles Francis Adams

CAMBRIDGE: *Jan.* 26, 1909

. . . I quite agree that Lawrence Lowell is the best candidate — by far — proposed.[1] He has a fine equipment so far as training and varied experience can equip a man; but the final test is personality, and no one can tell whether he will develop a commanding personality like Pres. Eliot's or a lubricating one like Pres. McKinley's — which seem to be the two kinds that 'accomplish things.' When I think what his election has possibly saved us from, I feel inclined to regard him already as a benefactor. . . .

To Charles Francis Adams

CAMBRIDGE: *Jan.* 29, 1909

Many thanks for the letters. My only regret is that I can't reply to them *in extenso*, as they deserve.

The *Magazine* did print a fragment of your Columbia Address — only a fragment, indeed, but the pith, it seemed to me of all, for it contained your *constructive* suggestions. The *destructive* part I should have printed too, if it had not been the September number, when we have the Harvard Phi Beta Oration and all the Commencement time speeches. They *have to go in*, whether the Editor wants them or not.

I should be deeply grieved if I thought that you supposed that I have edited the *Magazine* with a pro-Eliot —

[1] In a letter to Thomas Mott Osborne, January 6, 1909, Thayer wrote: 'Lowell is simply the best man in sight. I rather hoped they would take a man not implicated in Harvard feuds — Herbert Putnam, for instance — but it is evident that Lowell has more of the qualifications which the Fellows are seeking than anyone else. . . . I shall not be sorry if the lightning strikes Jim Storrow, for whose public work I have great admiration — and then I am on much friendlier terms with him than with any others of the candidates.' On January 25th he wrote to the same: 'I have good hopes of Lawrence Lowell . . . He (A. L. L.) feels his responsibility.'

or any other — bias: for I have conscientiously tried for seventeen years to have all sides represented. I have not always succeeded, because sometimes the champions of one party or another would not appear in print. This was true in the case of the Fogg Museum, when nobody would write, altho' several prominent graduates talked 'anonymously' to the extent of ten or twelve columns in the *Transcript*. This was true, too, in the case of the Three Years Course, and so on. I certainly have always rejoiced to have you contribute, altho' — as when you wrote on raising the tuition fee — some of our worthy Overseers urged me not to broach the subject.

So I trust that you do not think that I have been a partisan editor — Were I one, I ought to resign. Judging from the hostility I have had to face all round the circle, it seems likely that every man has had an inning who cared for one.

As for the general question Eliot *vs.* Harvard, I can't take it up tonight. I saw a great deal of Mr. Norton — no man of my generation here knew him so well — and he certainly had a very great admiration for Eliot. That he opposed certain measures is true; but he believed thoroughly in the Elective System. My own belief is that if the future primacy of Harvard College was to be saved, it could be saved only by organizing the *University* first. Harvard College in the 20th century without the University above it, would have sunk to a third-rate institution. Now we can go ahead and organize the College on whatever principles experience shall prove to be the soundest. And I hope there will be more and more culture — but the men who can impart culture are few. Now that Norton has gone there is only Palmer in the Faculty. *Sunt lachrymæ rerum*. . . .

To Charles Francis Adams

CAMBRIDGE: *Nov.* 15, 1911

DEAR MR. ADAMS:

I intended to apologize before this for leaving the Historical Society just as you began your paper last week. The truth is, if I remained, I should either have had apoplexy — which would have troubled the proceedings — or I should have fallen into a heavy and probably stertorous slumber — which would have been disrespectful.

I remarked to my neighbor, Dr. De Normandie, 'The thermometer must be at least 120°,' and he replied, with the veracity and charity that the successor of the Apostle Eliot should possess, 'Yes — and I am sure it has risen 10° while Melville Bigelow has been talking.'

Since Dowse Hall is not constructed like the stage of a theatre, through the wings of which those in danger of apoplexy might slip unobserved, would it not be possible, Mr. President, to have the Hall aired for two or three minutes between the adjourning of the Council and the meeting of the Society? If the windows were really opened then, some fresh air would come in. Tuttle might be deputed to wrap Dr. Green in a motorman's fur coat during this brief interval, and some of us would gladly administer hot toddy from a thermos bottle.

I attended that meeting especially to hear what you said about the *Trent* affair, and my disappointment was great. There seems to be, unfortunately, no certainty that the same may not happen again, as long as the temperature is gauged by Dr. Green's preference.

Very truly yours

WM. R. THAYER

I ought to add that I counted ten persons asleep, before

I went, and that the Chair himself seemed to be indulging in Homeric nods during the primogeniture talk.[1]

To Charles Francis Adams

CAMBRIDGE, MASSTTS: *April* 21, 1912

. . . I too have been wrestling — for the thousandth time — with this problem of the taken and the left. From our human standpoint, I can see neither reason nor justice in the process of selection practiced by the supernal forces — but this applies to life not less than to death.

The chief wonder to me is that, out of this welter of what we must regard as moral contradiction, Duty and Chivalry should have come at all.

The two passengers on the *Titanic* in whom I took a personal interest were Frank Millet and my old schoolmate, Archie Gracie. I knew that both would go down rather than take a place in a boat so long as any woman or child remained on board. Gracie's rescue was certainly marvellous. How much, and in how many ways, Frank Millet will be missed! . . .

To Charles Francis Adams

CAMBRIDGE, MASSTTS: *May* 18, 1912

I am very gratified to you for your letter to Lord Morley, whom I hope to see. Young George Trevelyan I know well by correspondence.

After my article on Macaulay in the *North American Review* three years ago,[2] I had two notes from Sir George, who — with a remarkable amiability on the part of an Englishman towards the work of a mere Yankee — said

[1] Thayer once sent to Mr. Adams the following lapidary tribute to those who suffer at meetings of learned societies: 'They also serve who only sit and doze.'

[2] 'Macaulay Fifty Years After,' *North American Review*, December, 1909.

it was the best ever written on that subject! So I may venture to call upon him, if it seems worth while. . . .

A few other letters serve to illustrate a little further Thayer's rôle as editor.

To Charles F. Thwing

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *Jan.* 19, 1909

The next *Magazine* is to be — naturally — an 'Eliot Number.' Taussig is writing the sequel to Dunbar's remarkable summary of the first twenty-five years, and Pres[t]. Hyde has promised a review of Mr. Eliot's new book. I greatly wish to have you in the galaxy.

Will you not send in the course of a week a brief article on (say) 'President Eliot's Message' — or such other pertinent topic as you prefer? You write compactly, forcibly, so that if I suggest a maximum of 1000 words I know you will give more than many other contributors spread over twice that space.

We are all well satisfied with Lowell's election. Some of the names suggested were ludicrous.

To W. Cameron Forbes

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
Sept. 25, 1910

To the Hon. W. Cameron Forbes
Governor General of the Philippines
Manila, P.I.

MY DEAR GOVERNOR FORBES:

So many Harvard men are already in the Philippines, and so many more are likely to go there in the next ten years, that I think an article on the general field for service open to Harvard men in the Islands, would have unusual value and pertinence. Will you not write such an article

for the *Magazine?* There is no doubt that it would be eagerly read — in two hemispheres. For the *Magazine* follows Harvard men everywhere.

We old Cambridge residents are very glad to have your brother Edward settle here, and he seems to be already well tied to his work at the Fogg Museum. College begins this week, with fine prospects. President Lowell's administration has started with a rush.

Very truly yours

WM. R. THAYER

To Barrett Wendell

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *Oct.* 15, 1911

It seems to be settled — happily — that Wister is very much alive. So I hope that when the time comes for an appreciation of his literary work, I shall not be the editor whose duty it may be to procure it.

In heaven, how pleasant an editor's life must be! No obituaries, no political ties, no book reviews, no advertisements. Every angel will know by intuition what books to read. Athletics won't exist. On the whole — perhaps there won't be any need of editors in heaven — and that may be why so few of them here qualify themselves to go there.

Such were some of Thayer's activities during the years from 1905 to 1911, literary, social, editorial. But the dominant interest of that period was the production of the biography of Cavour. With improved health, with conditions such that he could now do a full day's work and follow it with another, week after week, month after month, until the task was finished, this was, from a professional point of view, the happiest and most fruitful chapter of his life. His

correspondence was active with those of his friends who, like himself, were interested in things Italian, Countess Cesaresco, George Macaulay Trevelyan, Andrew Dickson White, H. Nelson Gay.

Thayer who himself would take endless pains to be of service to his friends, received in turn from them aid which they could give. He and Trevelyan, the one writing on Cavour, the other on Garibaldi, exchanged chapters as the work of each progressed, asked many questions of each other, discussed difficult problems as occasions offered. The two men were moving over the same historical field gleaning what it had to give each for his separate purpose. Each, too, added to the most scrupulous historical sense and conscience high literary gifts. Each represented in himself that blessed, and all too rare, union of science and art dedicated to a commanding theme.

Gay, as we have seen, had been attracted to Thayer by reading his *Dawn of Italian Independence*, a book which launched him upon what was to become his vocation, the building up of a great library upon the Italian Risorgimento. Gay's library and his extensive bibliographical knowledge were placed generously at Thayer's disposal and were gratefully appreciated and repeatedly acknowledged by the latter. When Thayer went to Italy in 1906 he was given the use of Gay's collections and worked day after day under the best conditions.

The main body of Thayer's material was found in the Harvard and Boston libraries, or in his own valuable working collection in his home, which in the course of the years had grown to a considerable size. But his relations with these other students of Italian history, and the continuous interchange of question and suggestion, were both profitable and stimulating.

The history of the writing of the *Life and Times of Cavour* is shown, at least fragmentarily, in the letters which follow. That the story is interspersed with other matters, is broken, interrupted, distracting, was natural, inevitable.

The mood in which the *Cavour* was taken in hand again, after the long interruption, is indicated in the following entries in Thayer's very occasional and intermittent diary:

Jan. 16, 1906. 'My 47th birthday. Physically, this has been the best year I have had since 1895. As my strength has increased, I have been able to do more things outside of my study. Two very happy achievements have been the testimonials to Mr. Norton and Mr. Garrison, in which I had a share. I have printed my *Short History of Venice*, which has been highly praised by some of the élite, but has not yet made its way into general popularity. I have more frequent requests for addresses, lectures, and magazine articles. On Oct. 12th, Columbus Day, I spoke to the Italians in Faneuil Hall — one of the proudest half-hours I remember. At the end of November, I printed in the *Graduates' Magazine* an article which raised such a storm as has not been seen here for a generation. I believed it right to strike a straight blow at the heart of the athletic evil, be the consequences what they might. For a time, they seemed likely to close my usefulness as an editor of the *Magazine*, if not to render me a Harvard outcast. I was perfectly firm in my will, but my nervous system quaked for a fortnight, making me fear a collapse. Gradually the bombardment slackened and my nerve grew steady, and I regard the experience pathologically, as the best possible proof of the degree to which I have got back my health after ten years ordeal. On Dec. 21st I read a poem at the celebration of the 275th anniversary of the

Founding of Cambridge — my first appearance on the stage of Sanders Theatre. The next day we all went to Philadelphia and passed a Merry Christmas with the Longstreths; after which I attended the session of the American Historical Association in Baltimore and Washington, reading my paper on 'Holidays' at the final meeting in the Congressional Library. Now, with a reasonable working capacity — I won't say health — I hope to write the *magnum opus* — Cavour. But long invalidism has made me inert, and frequent bafflings have somewhat checked my enthusiasm — not in the subject, but in the probability of accomplishing what I desire. And the past two years, the recurring conviction that we are not immortal, has had a numbing effect on my zeal. To escape from it, I try to plunge with all my might into the business and duties of the hour. I feel the immense pathos of mortality — if that be the fact — not so much for myself, as for the myriads of men and women and children who endure the evils of this life because they believe that the perfect compensation is to come hereafter. I have suffered so much, that at times the probability of annihilation — beyond reach of pain, failure and humiliation, is very consoling. Annihilation, seems such a bungling finish, unworthy of the power which could create the visible universe and man's moral nature and the visions of beauty and the delights of little children. Such a solution would shame a toad. But, why expect a better condition in another world, when the Power which we rely upon to grant that condition there, denies it to us here?'

'*April* 1, 1906. On Monday March 5th I began for the second time *The Life and Times of Cavour* and in the intervening four weeks I have written every day (except Sundays) averaging from 2500 to 3000 words a week. That is

a pace I cannot keep up when the time comes for much preparative reading. I am now fairly launched in the subject, the old enthusiasm has rekindled, and I feel that I may be able to make a better work than the earlier — better in substance, but probably less attractive in form. The toil of composition weighs on me more and more heavily. As my knowledge has broadened, I see many points of view, and this adds to the difficulty of selection, which is, after all, the artist's first business. We are planning a trip to Italy next Autumn, about three months on land, to give me an opportunity to get material, work in archives, to meet important men. I have been appointed delegate to the Congress della Storia del Risorgimento, to be held in Milan in November.'

To H. Nelson Gay

CAMBRIDGE, *March* 13, 1906

I can't believe that old Father Time whirls over Rome at the pace he sets us here. He has seen so much of Rome, that he must suspect that it will stay there a little while longer. But here he hustles along as if he thought that our cities were mushrooms — think of Cambridge seeming a mushroom even to him! — which would disappear in a night. Which all means that I have been very busy, first, getting out the *Magazine*, next, beginning *Cavour*, and last, going to endless committee meetings, dinners and receptions. I am doing everything this year, just to see how much I can stand, and also to let the public know that I am alive.

I have actually got Cavour ancestored, begotten, born, and graduated from the Military Academy, and I assure you that these first dozen pages come very hard. History is so much easier than biography! It would be no great task to describe in an essay Cavour's youth, because then

you could dilate or contract as you choose: but to put the same material in the opening chapter of a two-volume book is a different matter; for you must keep thinking of the scale on which the rest of the book is to be written. So I long for the time to come when politics and ideas and general conditions will be the order. I am pledged (to myself) to publish the work early in 1910, so that it may be in season for Cavour's Centenary, Aug. 10, that year. . . .

To H. Nelson Gay

CAMBRIDGE, *April* 5, 1906

. . . I have just re-read the first draft of Cavour — if you prefer this kind of a *draught*, you shall have it — written nine years ago, and I am pleased to find that I can probably use several chapters of it: enough, perhaps, to save me three months' work. I hope, Harry, that if we get to Rome, you will have patience to read the biography as far as it will have gone then, and that you will give me a downright opinion on it. You're the only person whose criticism of the substance I set much store by. This nine years' interruption has made it very hard for me to judge either the earlier or the later version. I am less sure of myself than I used to be; or perhaps it would be more correct to say that I see more ways of doing the thing, — which is harder than when you think the way you have chosen is inevitably the best. . . .

To Charles Eliot Norton

HOTEL DE L'EUROPE
VENICE, 26 *Oct.*, 1906

DEAR MR. NORTON:

I wish to send you a greeting from Venice, where I have you constantly in mind. What a delight it would be for me

if, when our gondola rounded the curve by the Foscari Palace, we should meet your's coming up the Canal! I wonder what you would think of Venice now. Even in the last dozen years its modern rôle of shop and show-place has become more pronounced, so that it is harder for one to find that undisturbed state of mind which is indispensable to an understanding of the real Venezia. The Present jars here more than almost anywhere else: because the Venetian Past has no relation with our Present — it is history, complete, symmetrical, finished forever — a great work of art (it seems to me). And Venetian Art belongs to Eternity as much as that can be said of anything mortal, and Eternity (let Münsterberg syllogize as he will) has but slight respect for our Today.

Yet I am sure that in five minutes St. Mark's and the Ducal Palace would cast the old spell over you, and the paintings and palace would make you forget how many years have past since you were here. In spite of the great outcry against restorations, the monuments of all kinds are much better cared for now than ever before, and if no earthquake comes the chief buildings ought to last a century or more. By removing the Library to the old Zecca the Ducal Palace has been relieved of a great weight, and in St. Mark's various jacks and wooden arches and other supports indicate that the weak places are to be strengthened. Still, all is so much out of plumb and level that a lively shake might bring the building down.

Coming back to it with new knowledge and wider experience, I am more and more amazed at its magnificence and cumulative beauty. The only discordant note now is the services conducted perfunctorily by ignorant or disinterested priests. I go there and sit in the twilight, and people the aisles and transepts and choir with patriarchs

and doges, nobles and *popolo*, who really believed, and both by their intensity of devoutness and by their medieval port and dress harmonized with the place. I see old Dandolo mount the porphyry pulpit and address the Barons of France, or Doge Contarini and Vettor Pisani pass out, having heard mass, to meet the Genoese at Chioggia.

But you will think me young again, at the Byronic stage (which, indeed, I outgrew long ago).

We have been in Italy four weeks — two we spent in Turin, and two have flown by here. At Turin I met some of the most interesting Italians of the generation — Lombroso, who was very hospitable, Graf and De Amicis. On our way East, we visited our friends, Count and Countess Martinengo, and at Vicenza we had a very interesting call on Fogazzaro, who has a beautiful villa on Monte Berico. Vicenza, as you know, is Palladio's city, and I saw there where McKim has got suggestions for much of his bastard architecture. Next week we go to the Congresso del Risorgimento at Milan, and then to Florence and Rome.

This will reach you a little before your birthday. May it find you well. It takes my affection and gratitude, and best wishes for your new year.

WM. R. THAYER

To Charles Eliot Norton

PALACE HOTEL, ROME
Dec. 15, 1906

DEAR MR. NORTON:

I am doubly glad to get your letter, because it has entertained me greatly and I have taken it as a sign that you are in good health.

Paul More's articles on Thoreau and the German Romanticists seemed to me, too, very good. I know of no

other critic in America who has his range and depth, and, what is almost equally important, his flexibility.

Speaking of criticism, I have just read Bliss Perry's 'Whitman' with much satisfaction. It seems to me to say the sober word on that most *un*sober of subjects, to show Whitman's great qualities and his pathos, laying stress, as is right, on the positive rather than the negative, and intimating much where reticence is better than argument. He holds himself in, for instance, and does not gratify the temptation to sarcasm, which many a situation creates. Whitman did, after all, reach the elemental in many a passage — 'Out of the Cradle Ceaselessly Rocking' has in it, for me at least, the quintessence of love and grief, emotions which not words but music seems best fitted to express. *Sunt lachrymæ rerum* — I wonder whether Virgil ever felt the poignancy of his words as some of us moderns have felt them! Whitman, by the way, loses comparatively little in an Italian translation which I was skimming the other day. The translator did generally so well that I was surprised to find him render 'I loafe and invite my soul' by '*Mangio*, ed invito la mia anima.' Bliss Perry is now in Rome, which accounts for my Whitmanesque digression. Perry goes home after Christmas, and I should suppose that this book ought to serve as a fine advertisement at the beginning of his career at Harvard.

At this point I was interrupted by a visit from Marion Crawford, who is a big, wholesome sort of fellow in appearance and very cordial in manner. We canvassed many subjects, chiefly Italian, but one of George Meredith's sayings, which he quoted, may not have reached you. Meredith described the novelist as 'Hall Cain and 'alf Abel.'

Ever faithfully yours

Wm. R. Thayer

To Andrew Dickson White

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *Feb.* 3, 1907

MY DEAR PRESIDENT WHITE:

I have just returned from four months in Italy, spent in collecting Cavour material for my long deferred biography. While there, I read a paper on him (at the Risorgimento Congress) which I was urged to print.[1] I send it to you, for I know that you too are a Cavourian. You will see that it is only a fragment, to be filled out in many places, and qualified in others, but still true in the main, I hope. . . .

Since I had the pleasure of seeing you at Bass Rocks two summers ago I have read your autobiography — read it with great delight and interest, and with the feeling that I shall not 'despair of the Republic' so long as it affords scope for careers like yours.

To Andrew Dickson White

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *Feb.* 20, 1907

Your letter is very kind, and your commendation most welcome — for you are almost the only person on this side of the water who knows the subject thoroughly. I wrote my *discorso* in Italian, with the thought that some time or other I might expand it in English, bringing out some matters which I had not space to touch on, and strengthening or qualifying my statements. Your favorable opinion encourages me to do this, altho' I can't undertake the work at once. I am pledged (to myself) to complete the biography of Cavour by January, 1910, and I must resist temptation. I look forward to your article in the *Atlantic*, which is due next week. It's very kind of you to write

[1] *Cavour e Bismarck. Un Parallelo Storico* (Roma, 1906).

Bliss Perry, who showed me your letter. The Napoleon is a splendid subject — why don't you treat it yourself? I never read Abbott's *Life* through — tho' as a boy I used to look eagerly at the pictures — but I am amused to find that he painted Napoleon as a moral man! Perhaps he knows better now — if he has been privileged to work in the archives of the Recording Angel — and it's hard to think of an Abbott, from Lyman to Rollo, who hasn't a key to every celestial closet.

Your seven essays will make a fine volume. I shall be particularly interested to have your view of Stein, whom Seeley taught me to admire. . . .

To H. Nelson Gay

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *March* 17, 1907

. . . At last, I am advancing into New Lands, having begun a chapter in which the State of Italy in 1850 will be described as fully and briefly as I can do it. Statistics are almost impossible to get for the sums actually wrung out of Lombardy-Venetia by Radetzky in '48 & '49, and of the actual amount of taxes paid by those provinces. I have the Italian estimates, of course, but not the Austrian: if you know any Austrian book containing authentic information, please send me the title.

When this chapter is done, I shall have plain sailing, narrative, which always goes rapidly. I have discarded that Introductory Chapter — you were quite right about it — and I shall 'spruce up' all that you read. Having got into the subject again, so that I begin to think in terms of Cavour, I find the 'pathetic fallacy' comes back that I can make a readable book on him, after all — always presupposing health. . . .

To Andrew Dickson White

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *April* 1, 1907

Let me congratulate you on your Cavour papers in the *Atlantic*.[1] The second essay, which I have just read, gives a swift and sympathetic survey of his wonderful career. You have packed into it a great deal of material, but it flows straight on, and the expression of your own views add to my enjoyment. I am not one of those human pumice-stones who desire historians to show no more emotion than they themselves feel.

I wish particularly to thank you for your kind reference to me. It compensates for many disappointments to have your approval. Now I am working vigorously at my Cavour, and, unless my health plays me false again, I shall complete it by 1910. I have reached the autumn of 1852, when he became Premier, and during the past month I have been studying microscopically the conditions of the other Italian States under the Restoration which came in 1849. Often as I have been over that field, I never so fully realized the mingling of stupidity and cruelty which the Austrians, the Pope and Bomba erected into a system of government on their return. It is going to be difficult merely to describe affairs in the Papal States without bringing down on me accusations of exaggeration and prejudice — but you, at least, know the truth.

[1] President White published two articles on 'The Statesmanship of Cavour' in the *Atlantic Monthly* for March and April, 1907. In the second he said concerning Thayer's work: 'For interesting and brilliant descriptions and statements of the various episodes both before and after the battle of Novara, see W. R. Thayer, *The Dawn of Italian Independence*' (*Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 99, p. 511). And again, 'For a masterly development of the reasoning which proves Cavour greater in true statesmanship, see W. R. Thayer, *Cavour and Bismarck*, Roma, 1906.' This last was the paper which Thayer read before the Risorgimento Congress at Milan in 1906. It was later translated into English and published in the *Fortnightly Review*, March and April, 1909, and in the *Atlantic Monthly*, March, 1909.

I trust that you are going on with the other papers in the series which, Bliss Perry told me, you had planned. We are to be at Magnolia this summer, and if you go to Gloucester I shall have the pleasure of seeing you.

To Andrew Dickson White

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *Oct.* 21, 1907

. . . I write today as Editor to ask you whether it may not be agreeable to you to join in the following plan: Professor Norton's 80th birthday falls on Nov. 16th, and as we do not wish it to pass unhonored, I hope to get from five or six persons of eminence, who know his work and life, and value it, some brief appreciations of him. Whether one agrees or not with Mr. Norton's opinions on this question or that, his general influence has been so wide and wholesome, he has so stood for fifty years for the highest intellectual and civic ideals, and has helped so generously and unflaggingly so many men and causes, that I feel that the occasion to honor him is a privilege. If you feel in sympathy, dear Mr. White, and care to write a page or two, I shall be very grateful. I am asking only five or six — Mr. Bryce, Mr. Howells, Goldwin Smith, and two or three others. 'Copy' would be due by Oct. 31st.[1]

As we wish the remembrance to be a surprise, please keep our plan private. . . .

To H. Nelson Gay

CAMBRIDGE: *Jan.* 16, 1908

This is my 49th birthday, and I mean to begin celebrating it by sending you a greeting. Among the few treasures

[1] The *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, December, 1907, published appreciations of Mr. Norton, by James Bryce, Charles W. Eliot, Andrew D. White, H. H. Furness, R. W. Gilder, T. W. Higginson, W. D. Howells, Goldwin Smith, G. H. Palmer, and Bliss Perry.

which I value most is your friendship. I hope not to wear it out by over-using it, with my many calls for books, pamphlets, information and criticism.

The reflections-of-a-man-on-the-verge-of-fifty have nearly all been made, so that I needn't trouble you with mine. It does seem strange, however, to reflect that I have lived some 17,000 days and have so little to show for them; that I am still surprised by the accidents of life; that I have found no clue to the universe — only a 'rule of thumb' for getting along from day to day; and that I should still cherish the delusion that I am young and can, with even a modicum of health and strength, do work that may be of service to somebody. But I am sure I know what are the best things, the only things worth a bajocc', in this marvellous existence, and I am grateful that I have had them in large measure. They compensate for the great disappointments, although we never quite persuade ourselves that it was necessary to have the disappointments, especially when they seem to maim or check or divert the talents which we wished to devote to their proper purpose.

I've been working zealously on Cavour — some 65 MS. sheets in this interval. . . . The chief problem is how much to quote verbatim from speeches and letters. . . .

I keep thinking of those 10,000 Crispi pamphlets! What a haul! Don't let them kill you, however, for they are but paper and printer's ink, with an idea and a fact here and there — nothing worth sacrificing yourself for.

I rejoiced at Nathan's election as sindaco. He has been more than courteous to me — which doesn't affect my opinion that he will be a first-rate antidote to your Jesuit neighbors in the Leonine City. You evidently foresaw which way the wind was going to blow when you chose your residence near to the Synagogue. Did I tell you that

Nathan translated my Mazzini, and had it printed in the *Nuova Antologia* last number, wholly without my knowledge? That's the sort of kindness that hasn't happened to me before.

Can't you get rid of Giolitti? He is the Upas of contemporary public life in Italy — if the Upas is still permissible as a flower of speech. It did such exhausting service in the last generation that I believe botanists now declare it extinct. . . .

To H. Nelson Gay

CAMBRIDGE, *April* 1, 1908

. . . I have been going over my recent chapters with unalloyed disappointment. They won't do. The entire work won't do. I have tackled a subject which no living historian — tho' you rolled Goldwin Smith and John Morley into one — could be equal to. Except that I don't approve of 'retiring under fire,' I would abandon history and devote the rest of my life to writing short poems, short stories, and a *journal intime, à la* Pepys, to be printed in the next century, or never. But there's the seductive Cavour, who knows very well that I can't escape from his spell until I have written 'Finis' to his story or 'R. I. P.' is carved on my 'broken column.' I dread not only making a mess of the history, but of turning out one of those desiccated historical cusses whom I have held up all my life as a warning. . . .

To Andrew Dickson White

ANNISQUAM, MASS'TTS: *July* 18, 1908

DEAR PRESIDENT WHITE:

I appreciate deeply your kind letter in regard to 'Italica.'[1] In sending you the book I did not suppose that you

[1] In 1908 Thayer republished in book form under this title a number of essays on various Italian themes.

would read all the papers — many, if not all, of which are on subjects which you explored for yourself long ago. They are 'popular,' because over here almost any essay has to be to stand any chance of being accepted by a magazine: but perhaps that quality is not always a disadvantage. When you know that you are writing for a public which consists of some hundreds or thousands of reasonably intelligent persons, instead of for a score or two of specialists, you have to take care to be clear — and that, I believe, is a very important element in writing.

Still, I wish that we had organs like the *Fortnightly* or the *Contemporary*, in which one can let oneself go. I have just been reading Morley's new volume of 'Miscellanies,' which are made up of at least half a dozen essays which not even the *Atlantic* would print: and yet they are the product of a rich, strong mind and of a writer who seems to me the best now in Britain. How he would have been handicapped here!

Your suggestion of lectures falls in with a wish I have long had.[1] I should like to give a course of lectures, and I intend to prepare one: but I write slowly, and for two years past all the time I have had for original work has been devoted to my biography of Cavour, which must be completed — D.V. — in January, 1910. When that is off my hands, I shall feel free to undertake a series of lectures. I have already, during the past dozen years given an occasional lecture here and there, but I don't speak extemporaneously and don't dictate — which means two or three weeks to be spent merely in writing out an hour's talk.

I have long wished to visit Cornell, and to see, especially,

[1] President White had suggested that Thayer should give a course of lectures at Cornell University.

your noble collections of books. You told me some time ago of your Sarpi library, which will have a great interest for me. Mrs. Thayer and I are both grateful for your invitation and, if opportunity serves before 'Cavour' is completed, we may make a short trip to Ithaca.

What a satisfaction it must be to you to see the institution which you really created, going forward in good work, with a long future before it! But your greatest service to America, it seems to me, is the example you have set to men of means to cultivate themselves and take the lead in intellectual progress. . . .

To H. Nelson Gay

CAMBRIDGE, *Dec.* 29, 1908

. . . I had a great trip to Washington three weeks ago — did I write you about it? A delightful lunch at the Bryces', a dinner — *banchetto* — at Mayor's, and much interesting talk with old and new acquaintances made the days go very fast; but I couldn't keep up the pace, and was relieved to start home again.

We have had a great Christmas celebration, with the most nearly complete family gatherings since our marriage. Tonight, we go to dine at Brookline with the W. T. Sedgwicks to meet Mahaffy, who is lecturing at the Lowell Institute. I've already seen him — a veritable troglodyte, who opened fire on me with 'You're all *dickydent* over here — shockingly *dickydent*, and you were foolish enough to free your slaves.'

What's one to say, that's even technically polite, to such a remark? He's a Paddy, a don, and — of all things! — a Church of England parson! With such a complex *mongrelness* there's nothing but silence. His favorite adjective is 'rotten,' which he applied indiscriminately to

Lord Cromer, our Pullman cars, Gladstone, German philologians — and pretty much everything and body. But he is amusing — full of stories, blarney, lies; makes up historical anecdotes as he goes along; and is not intimidated by a little thing like a date.

Such a Britisher helps to explaim the dickydence of England, as revealed in the Boer War. But Paddy trying to ape John Bull — only more so — is a strange sight.

I had laid up much about Roosevelt to tell you, but my time has run out. The papers give you the essentials — enough to keep you boiling, no doubt. I hoped he would really fling a bomb that would hit a few *individuals* in Congress, but it seems that his criticisms were purely abstract. . . .

We are just beginning to get news of the earthquake — poor Calabria! poor Sicily! poor Italy! Gov. Guild has asked me to serve on a relief committee — tho' I am no hand at securing money. The cable also reports that Griscom has resigned.

Addio! Best wishes — (*cent'anni*, at least!) to you both.

To H. Nelson Gay

CAMBRIDGE, *Feb.* 28, 1909

. . . I have just finished another *Magazine* and come back to Cavour. In a few days I shall deliver Buol's ultimatum and declare war. How I'm to have the book ready by April, 1910, I don't see. I could spend three years profitably in revising and rewriting. The farther I get on, the clearer it is that I am unreeling a very different historical skein from any that other historians have to show: but I doubt more and more its excellence, and, judging by past experience, it isn't likely to find a public soon. I don't write primarily for fame, but I have reached the age when

recognition would be pleasant. Egotism? No doubt. And yet a certain respect for fellow-man's opinion and delight in his sympathy are wholesome. . . .

To Countess Cesaresco

MAGNOLIA, MASS'TTS: *June* 20, 1909

Your beautiful book came just as we were busy packing to move down to our summer home.[1] I have already read several of the chapters, with ever increasing admiration for your *mastery* of your knowledge. Mere erudition is so common, and usually so dry! But you make your myriad facts live — just as you did in your book on Folk Songs. This subject you have dealt with is of intense interest to me — perhaps because I know so little about it: but it touches on man's deepest concerns, his religious beliefs and hopes, and I never tire of hearing what my fellow pilgrims report on the journey, as they experienced it, or the end, as they foresaw it. What animals we ourselves are, after all! I wish that I had Melampus's gift — or our Yankee Thoreau's, for he was familiar with all the creatures in Concord Woods. Have you ever determined where the line comes between Animal and Human — the line which, it seems to me, Shelley (borrowing from Shakespeare) described —

"We look before and after,
And pine for what is not."

To do those things is the mark of the Human. But who knows but that the Ants, for instance, experience hopes and regrets — perhaps they have their Homers too, who sing to them epics of Ant legendary heroines.

This book must certainly give you still another reputa-

[1] Cesaresco, *The Place of Animals in Human Thought*. London, 1909.

tion, as shining and enviable as that which you earned long ago by your Risorgimento studies. I need not say that we congratulate you. . . .

. . . I am working at Cavour again, with unquenched zest; and only wonder that I allow social engagements to steal my time from this much more interesting pursuit. Can you, or Count Martinengo, help me to any information which will clear up the dispute over the Battle of S. Martino? All the authorities, except the Piedmontese, agree that, at the end of the day, Benedek was already withdrawing, by his Emperor's orders, when the Piedmontese made their final assault. The Piedmontese claim that they *drove* him off the hill. What is a poor historian, bent on telling the truth and doing justice, to say?

Let me thank you for the Meredith Funeral program. It seems to me that the critics who have been appraising him during the past month, have got no nearer to him than an Iroquois might get to the Spirit of the Greek Pan.

I hope that England's nerves are growing steadier. We Anglo-Saxons must stand together, come weal, come woe. . . .

To H. Nelson Gay

MAGNOLIA, *Sept.* 9, 1909

That mind's-eye view of you, sitting on top of your Alp and cooling off, is the best yet. Now drive the rheumatism away, and then come over here where, except during occasional summer spells, we can give you a climate that has all the virtues and none of the vices of champagne. Speaking of this, I have recently been examined by one of the keen young specialists in Boston, who finds that my arteries are too old. He asked me, in substance, whether I had been a hard drinker! What shall it profit a man to

teetle-tottle (as our French friend Allard calls it) only to find that he has at fifty arteries that ought to have been produced by at least twenty-five years of systematic alcoholization? I hope to hold out for two years more — to finish *Cavour* — but I don't mean to be worried, unless there is some new bad symptom, by this latest medical discovery. At fifty — well, at fifty, there is very little about one's carcase that has the bloom of youth on it.

As to the illustrations (which you mention), I mean to put them in, irrespective of publisher; my wish being to make a book on Cavour as nearly complete as possible. . . .

Have you heard that the North Pole is being discovered every few days? The stay-at-homes are all cackling like Guelfs and Ghibellines over the rival claimants. . . .

Is it true that Nigra's memoirs have been destroyed? What's the use of having *you* within a mile of his apartment, if historical material like that can be spirited away by the villains? . . .

To George Macaulay Trevelyan

CAMBRIDGE, *Sept.* 27, 1909

Heartiest congratulations to you on your new book,[1] and many thanks for the copy you have so kindly sent to me. I hope to read it now at my leisure, without that proof-reader's solicitude which never lets me really enjoy the flavor of a book.

I am sure that you have made no mistakes in making two practically independent volumes of Garibaldi and the Thousand — and by this arrangement you ought to whet your public's interest. Hurry up with the sequel, for I shall soon be at the Summer and Autumn of '60

[1] Trevelyan, *Garibaldi and the Thousand*, 1909.

Episodes myself, and it will be a constant help to have your interpretations to refer to.

And the year will see me through: but I envy you who have already come so far on your task, without knowing the disappointments of inadequate health. May this volume be even more widely read than the first — indeed, it can't fail to be — and bring you the still wider recognition which you deserve!

To Countess Cesaresco

CAMBRIDGE, *Dec.* 2, 1910

I am very glad that Mr. White's book reached you safely. Besides the Grotius, you will find the Turgot and Bismarck unusually interesting. I wonder that you have never met Mr. White, for he has been much on the Continent and in England, and is almost as great a traveler as yourself. A very delightful talker he is, with the added *convincingness* (is there such a word?) of a man who has seen the best men of his time and has taken part in great events. He has been an Ambassador at St. Petersburg and at Berlin, and has served on special missions, besides being the organizer of Cornell University, of which he made a new educational instrument in the world. It was he who persuaded Goldwin Smith to come over here. . . .

I have a high regard for him — particularly for his 'United Kingdom' — a book which has no equal or similar in our language. In his power to pack *il piu nell' uno* he reminds me of Tacitus, and for the pure pleasure of reading, I know of no other recent history which I enjoy so much. . . .

. . . The end of my book is near — perhaps 50 pages, or less than 20,000 words, will set me free. Till then, I must

continue to seem unresponsive to my correspondents. I often wish that you were near, so that I might talk over the double — and treble — and many-faced problems that come up. Trevelyan and I are exchanging chapters on this last period, and you will be glad to know — tho' it won't surprise you — that he continues to employ with great success his gift for narrative. It's stimulating to have such companionship — I don't say competition because our works are so different that they can't be rivals. I envy him the ampler scope which his plan affords him for details and the picturesque: but if I don't make Cavour as interesting to *color che sanno* as Garibaldi is captivating to the sensation-loving masses, it will be my fault.

What do they say over there in regard to the Trecchi papers, published last summer in the *Nuova Antologia?* Especially, the memorandum of Aug. 5, in which Vic. Emanuel bade Trecchi to tell Garibaldi to go ahead and conquer Naples and Rome? Trevelyan attaches more importance to it than now seems to me warranted. . . .

Thus the work went on, advancing steadily toward the goal that had proved so long elusive. Finally it was finished as the following note to Gay shows:

To H. Nelson Gay

CAMBRIDGE, *Jan.* 25, 1911

Cavour died at about eleven o'clock this morning. I never expect to feel so bereaved again, unless I have the misfortune to outlive my own very nearest and dearest.

Many months were now spent in the correction of proofs, in the routine work of seeing the book through the

press. Finally on October 14, 1911, *The Life and Times of Cavour* was published.

Two items from a diary show Thayer's mood as he finally took leave of his long and formidable task:

'*Sep.* 22, 1911. — *Magnolia.* Yesterday, about eleven o'clock in the forenoon, I read the last page proof of the Index of "Cavour." Since the 25th of last January, when I finished the last chapter, not the "Conclusion" — I have worked without rest or holiday; and now, no matter what happens, that duty has been performed. The first feeling is that a great burden of responsibility has been lifted.'

'*Oct.* 14, 1911 — 8 *Berkeley Street.* Today "Cavour" is put on sale. For three weeks I have been enjoying a strange sense of relief, accompanied by a zest for doing nothing that I never felt before. I seem to have a boundless capacity for indolence, which I leisurely sip and sip, as if I were a lotos-eater. Yet all the while the Great Presence is so near me, that I cannot believe we have parted company for good. Were I to die now and meet him face to face, I am sure that he would not rebuke me. My ability has fallen short; but not my purpose, which was to tell the whole truth about him, so far as I knew it, because I was convinced that the truth alone could do him justice.

'This is the Battle of Hastings Day. I could wish to be another William the Conqueror if that meant that I have painted Cavour so vividly that the English-speaking world will recognize in him one of the World's Benefactors and one of the most interesting human beings that ever lived. That would be an achievement outweighing many inventions.'

Four or five more letters and this chapter may be appropriately closed. One of them is to Lady Agatha Rus-

sell, daughter of Lord John Russell, whose part in the making of the Kingdom of Italy had had a distinct importance.

To Henry Osborn Taylor

CAMBRIDGE, MASSTTS: *Sept.* 13, 1911

DEAR MR. TAYLOR:

I meant long ago to congratulate you on your book on 'The Mediaeval Mind.' Everyone who realizes the value of such a work, as I certainly do, ought to thank its author.

When one has been long in the toils of modern historical biography, it is a great relief and satisfaction to turn to your microcosm of an epoch whose accounts are closed, in order to discover, it may be, the clue to the argument. For if we had the key to one age, we should be able to unlock the mystery of all.

You seem to me to possess the rare but indispensable qualities necessary for so vast a work. You distil the significance from the special, concrete case, and you generalize fruitfully, from very broad and well-digested knowledge.

I hope I shall live to read your epitome of the Renaissance, which will be, in many respects, the most interesting of all — it touches ourselves so closely and brings into the foreground the mighty conflicts which neither our children, nor our children's children will see settled.

Very truly yours

WM. R. THAYER

To Lady Agatha Russell

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
October 31, 1911

MY DEAR LADY AGATHA,

Your last note crossed my parcel of books on the ocean. I hope that they have reached you safely before this, and

that, if you look at the passages referring to your Father, you will find that I have done him justice.

From the time I was a little boy, 'Lord John' was one of my admirations; for my mother was much in England during the fifties and sixties, and I caught her enthusiasm for him long before I knew what politics meant. From her, too, came my passion for Italy, which seems to have been born in me — a passion which the disillusions of recent years have not quenched. Judge of my satisfaction, therefore, when on coming in middle life to write Cavour's biography, I found Lord John the powerful supporter of Italian liberty.

May I add that I have always sympathised with his exasperation at having to be controlled by that virtuous German martinet, Prince Albert, from behind Queen Victoria's petticoats? For a statesman of Lord Russell's high spirit, experience and ability that position must have been galling. I trust that in saying this to his daughter I am not guilty of lèse-majesté!

Let me thank you heartily for your invitation. If we go to England, which we hope to do before long, I shall pay my respects to you in person.

Very sincerely yours

WM. R. THAYER

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASS^TTS: *Oct.* 19, 1911

DEAR MARGARET:

The book was given to a voracious public on October 14 — the anniversary of the Battle of Hastings, which we regard as a family affair, since the Earl of Hastings was the ancestor of Betty. It is really pretty fine to have Plantagenet blood flowing in my daughter's veins, tho' not in my own.

A copy of this work is now crossing the ocean addressed to San Remo. Please give it room on your shelf, but don't force yourself to read it. That is the last thing I desire. I feel that the family, and those who really are part of it, have heard more than enough of this poor product of a weary brain. I am thankful to have lived to finish it, because it will at least indicate that I aimed high. Fate decreed that I should not fly, but plod, and often only crawl. Still, I hope that at least the outlines of Cavour's greatness and allure will be found in the book. The subject surpasses every other in the nineteenth century.

How long ago it seems since I took the duplicate of the first chapters to you for safe-keeping, and you served as a trusty archivist! The finished volumes you will be able to use to hold your roof down when the scirocco blows a gale, or to heighten the piano stool, or for many other purposes.

Since Saturday — the 14th — I have been living in a bomb-proof excavated in our back garden, and stocked with a six-months supply of canned food. Occasionally, as now, I lift the lid just enough to see to write. Then I sit tight, and await the volleys of critics' shots. Possibly, this was the origin of hibernation. — But enough, and more than enough, of this foolishness. . . .

Last night we saw Yeats's Irish Players in *The Playboy of the West* — the Paddiest of all Paddy works I ever saw or read. Not a glimmer of an inkling of moral sense in all those gorillas and chimpanzees from County Mayo. The hero, made a hero, because he was a parricide — and so on, every relation of life topsy-turvy with the manner and smell of the pig-pen pervading the whole. Don't be fooled when they tell you that the Celtic Revival is sure to outdo the Greeks: it is Blarney, and worse. . . .

To Gay, Thayer wrote on October 23, 1911, about the two volumes he had sent him: 'As to their present or final value, I can't tell — a writer means so much that he doesn't say, and often so inadequately. I think I could sit down and write another volume of things left out, which might be equally important. . . . My purpose, conscious or unconscious, has been to *interpret*. I have lived the Risorgimento through in imagination and sympathy. *Ecco tutto*!'

And on December 26 he wrote: 'Yesterday was the brightest Christmas I have had for several years. We had all the visible tokens of family and friendly affection and remembrance, and I had special reason for satisfaction. The book is done, for better, for worse — at least it shows that, in spite of handicaps which I thought would be fatal, I have not been a willing drone.'

CHAPTER VI

AN INTERLUDE

1911–1914

THE publication of *The Life and Times of Cavour* in October, 1911, was, it is needless to say, a red-letter day in the life of Thayer. The book was an immediate and notable success. It brought its author widespread and enthusiastic recognition, which he appreciated but did not exaggerate. The appearance of *Cavour* placed Thayer in the forefront of American biographers. He had produced a masterpiece. In him the prevailing mood was one of deep gratefulness that he had been spared to finish the pleasant and exhausting task which had hovered over him since youth.

At last the sun was shining and golden opinions were flowing in from every quarter. Barrett Wendell, with whom he had been associated for a brief span twenty-three years earlier in the work of the English Department of Harvard University, 'said to me Friday,' writes Thayer to Gay on December 26, 1911, 'that no book had made such a stir in Boston in twenty years.' If the rest of the world did not necessarily take its cue from Boston, its approval was at any rate as spontaneous and as hearty.

The following extracts from a large correspondence indicate, at least in a measure, the warmth of the reception accorded *The Life and Times of Cavour*, by men of the most dissimilar types.

To John T. Morse, Jr.

CAMBRIDGE: *Jan.* 8, 1912

DEAR MR. MORSE:

Your letter would compensate any author for much toil — not because you give me such splendid credentials, but because you have read with complete sympathy not only the book but my purpose. You see what I intended to put into it, as nobody else has seen, probably because most critics stop at the letter and don't inquire into the spirit of such a work.

To have your corroboration and approval are the very highest reward that can come to any American historian: for, as I have said before, I regard you as past grand master (and present too) of the technique and products of our art.

Of course, I agree with you as to the possibility — or desirability — of writing an absolutely impartial biography. Every man is bound to show his preferences — no matter how hard he tries to hide them. A judge is supposed to hear both sides, but his verdict is spoken wholly from one side — the side he was put on the bench to uphold. So I have never consciously refused a hearing to any party or person — on the contrary, I have tried to present the data by which the reader could judge for himself whether he agrees with my decision or not.

My dear Mr. Morse, it is a pleasure to know that you, and others — don't judge history, or men or life, by the Ph.D. standard which — as Wm. James showed and so many of us perceive — desiccates its votaries. Isn't it time that the old notions — that is, thirty years old — were exploded, that, if a book is interesting, it can't be history?

I expect more "malice" from the English Tories, but per-

haps there will be readers even in England who will get far enough in the book to see that (unlike the Tories) I distinguish, and give high praise to some of their statesmen. More than half of their papers have spoken very cordially already. Among many comic remarks this from the *London World* — the *Town Topics* of Belgravia — stands first: 'Why should an American Republican presume to criticize Royal Personages?'[1]

Your letter starts many thoughts, but I will spare you — who have dealt so long with authors that you know how immodestly garrulous they can be.

I hope your eyes will improve more rapidly. Thank you again for the very kind invitation to dinner. If your interest and approbation continue through the second volume, I shall begin to wonder whether I wrote the book.

Ever faithfully yours

Wm. R. Thayer

To Theodore Roosevelt

Cambridge, Mass^tts: *Dec.* 20, 1911

Dear Theodore:

I did not hear till last night, from an Overseer who was dining here, of the very kind allusion you made to my 'Life of Cavour' at the Overseers' Meeting a week ago.

I am doubly glad that you spoke up — first, because it is a satisfaction to have one's work commended in that presence, and, next, because, coming from you, the remarks cannot fail to be discussed. There is also a third reason, namely, that I am glad that *you* agree with me that history should be vivid, and vital and significant. On this

[1] In a letter to Harrison S. Morris (January 15, 1912) Thayer says: 'I speak only Piccadilly English now, since a review in one of the English newspapers said that — except for *provincial* diction — Mr. Thayer's 'Cavour' would equal Trevelyan's Macaulay.'

Staff of The Crimson, 1880

Left to right, standing: *Allen Curtis, Guy Waring, Evert J. Wendell, Elliot H. Pendleton, George C. Buell, Ivan N. Panin, Frank E. Fuller.* Seated: *Thomas P. Ivy, James B. Ludlow, Abbott L. Mills* (on floor), *William R. Thayer, Frederick O. Barton, William H. Manning, Curtis Guild, Jr.*

last point, judging from your own work, I had little doubt; but of course I didn't know how my concrete specimen would strike you.

The historian in America today, who has any noble conception of his calling, is the least understood of artists: for the standard set by the history departments of our colleges is the Ph.D. thesis. Unless you write in that fashion, you can't be a historian. It is as if the stone-cutters at the quarry should vote that no architects were needed for planning a building, or the paint-grinders should vote the Titians and Rembrandts out of existence.

In France, and (largely) in England too, this absurd notion about historians has passed out: but it clings on here, with other Teutonic barnacles. Now you are *dynamic*, and so it occurs to me to suggest to you to give this subject proper treatment in one of your articles. I fully expect to see the day — if I live ten or fifteen years longer — when even in our colleges history will take its proper place. From the beginning of time, there has been irreconcilable warfare between pedants — treadmill men — and those to whom life is, under whatever aspect, real.

I have no personal grievance. Far from it. The 'Cavour' has gone into a second edition in less than two months — a success which, judging from what the publishers say, has not been matched here by any historical book of like cost about a foreign celebrity — not even by Prescott or Motley. But what gives the author solid satisfaction is the unexpected and almost unstinted praise of experts like Lodge and John T. Morse, and of keen, sound readers of many tastes and environments — from Governor Long and Dr. Crothers here, to lawyers and thinkers in far removed places. London, too, absorbed the first consignment in a fortnight, and cabled for more.

All this I take to mean that there are thousands of red-blooded people who will read history if they find in it what they look for in any live account of men and women who, in their day, were very much alive.

I am watching our political situation with keen interest. I can't help feeling that if you would lead a frank, low tariff campaign, you would sweep the country.

Ever very truly yours

Wm. R. Thayer

P.S. It is hardly necessary for me to add, in regard to the Ph.D.s' standard, that I believe as earnestly as any of them in the need of thorough research; only, I make the collection of material the *beginning* and not the *end* of the historian's task. You don't find Morley or Bryce or John Morse parading their bibliographies!

Merry Christmas!

To Arthur Lyon Cross

Cambridge, Mass., *May* 14, 1912

I thank you heartily for your letter about 'Cavour.' After one has given many years to such a work, without thought of how it may be received, it is most gratifying to have proof that readers like you find it good. I have been surprised at the wide-spread interest it has awakened — widespread geographically and temperamentally, for it seems to appeal to very various tastes. My great hope is that it will make our people realize Cavour's greatness, and also, perhaps, that the questions he mastered — the questions of Church and State, for instance — may soon touch us very closely.

We sail on May 28th, so that I shall not have the pleasure of seeing you in June; but later, whenever you come East, don't fail to let us know. I want to hear your

criticism on my reference to the Crimean War — and any other matters. Of course, in a book where so many persons figure and such radical interests are involved, no historian can expect to please everyone. His book would be pap — if he tried to do so — and none of us cares for pap....

Two other letters of a somewhat later date really belong here.

To Robert Grant

CAMBRIDGE: *Sept.* 29, 1912

DEAR GRANT:

It is a great satisfaction to come home from a trip abroad to find a letter like yours awaiting me. Of course I prize your approval. A novelist of your achievements can judge whether the portraits of my *dramatis personæ* — who were real human beings — can hold their own in *vraisemblance* with the creations of you artists in fiction. And you, who understand that selection is the test of art, can appreciate the difficulty of selecting from the mountains of material that my subject had to furnish.

It is good of you to write; because, as you doubtless feel too, an author is more cheered by the opinion of one reader whose judgment he values than by much impersonal and irresponsible praise.

I hope you have had a fine summer. Ours was most satisfactory. I often had your 'Grandfather's' convictions in mind, and wished that I might have had him — that is, you — at hand to discuss the problems that thrust themselves on me at every turn. The world is whirling, or lurching, into a new orbit, and I found the going more unsteady in Europe than it is here.[1]

Ever very truly yours

WM. R. THAYER

[1] Thayer had spent the summer of 1912 in Europe.

To W. Cameron Forbes

CAMBRIDGE, MASSTTS: *June* 1, 1913

MY DEAR GOVERNOR-GENERAL:

I am very grateful to you for your letter about 'Cavour.' The approval of men who deal in really great affairs, is particularly gratifying to me; because it is such men who ought to appreciate Cavour's masterliness in carrying through the most complicated and apparently desperate enterprise of the last century. Would that we had his successor to mediate between the antagonisms of Industrialism today!

For me he has not only the attraction of genius in statesmanship, but also the attraction of a fascinating companion, and that large simplicity and directness which ought to be — but aren't always — the mark of greatness.

Of course — being human — I take whatever satisfaction is proper in the success of the book; but more, far more, in seeing the significance of Cavour and the Risorgimento spreading far and sinking deep as a result of the book. The author will be forgotten — but Papa Camillo will not. Our Western World will be better for knowing him.

I hope that you find your health really solid, on your return to the tropics. Don't work too hard — you have doubtless heard that advice before, and smile! I shall be glad when you come home, to devote yourself to our problems, which sadly need a man like you. The conflict between Labor and Capital goes on with increasing bitterness, and thus far Labor makes all the gains. Sober men predict a test battle all along the line within five years; others say ten. Being a historian, I don't predict, but I do see that the struggle is fundamental; and foundations are not laid or destroyed in a day....

In 1912 Thayer took a holiday, the first in several years. With Mrs. Thayer and their daughter Margaret he sailed from Boston on the *Laconia* and reached Liverpool on June 5th. After a summer in England and on the Continent — in France and Switzerland and a bit of Northern Italy — they returned on the *Franconia* of the Cunard Line, sailing from Liverpool September 17th and reaching Boston, September 25th. A few letters written on this trip are of interest:

To Robert Grant

"R.M.S. Laconia"
June 5, 1912
3 *hours from Liverpool*

Dear Grant:

I send a line — in the roaring forties — to say that I read with much interest your discussion, in 'The Convictions of a Grandfather' of the great problems that are perplexing all of us. Tho' you glide over them with the ease of an expert skater, you really show them in many aspects.

I don't get used to you in the guise of an old gentleman of seventy five, but you keep the character consistently, and the discussion is as young as R. G. himself.

We have news this morning that the Dockers' Strike is beaten and that the King is going to the Derby today — so England will take breath for a week or two. But here and at home and throughout Continental Europe I foresee that the agitation won't be finally settled until the Have-nots get a very much larger share of this world's goods.

You must be having a hot time with the Republican nomination.

Ever very truly yours

Wm. R. Thayer

To Theodore W. Richards

GRAND HÔTEL DE LA CLOCHE
DIJON, *August* 1, 1912

DEAR THEODORE:

I often wish that you were near, so that I might discuss with you life in general and particular as things turn up. We have not traveled very fast, except during the motor trip, but there are so many new impressions every hour that I feel as if we had already made the grand tour.

I don't get used to the spectacle of misery wholesale which is so much more striking abroad than at home — because at home we manage not to come in contact with most of it, or we know what compensations or alleviations there may be in special cases. Over here, even in France which is so prosperous, you can't help wondering how the masses stand it. England is much worse off. And yet both here and there the prospect of the social revolution being fired immediately doesn't seem likely. Still, it is safer not to prophecy — especially where the French are concerned.

The immense conservatism of the English struck me more than ever, and I was constantly amused by the assumption, common to both Tories and Radicals, that anything English was therefore the best. How systematized and conventionalized they are! At Scrubbleby-le-Spink they always eat sausage on Michaelmas; at Dodocaster they have a bun which must be baked on Candlemas; and so on. This gives John Bull an intense local sentiment, but it seems to indicate that he is becoming petrified. A very intelligent Trinity College man assured me that the old bearskin hat worn by some of the regiments is the most comfortable, practical and convenient ever devised for soldiers! All this is amusing to an observer from outside,

but the peril lies in the possible inability of the English to adapt themselves to the changing world.

At Rydal Mount and Grasmere, at Joan of Arc's cell at Rouen, at the massive Church of St. Etienne at Caen, with William the Conqueror's tomb — indeed, wherever we have come upon the haunts or memorials of the really great, I have reconfirmed my old belief that the *man* and not the *milieu* stands foremost.

I hope that among your other discoveries, you will penetrate the mystery of personality: but if you do, look out! It's bad enough now to know that X-rays can impertinently peer into our gizzards: what would it be if you succeeded in revealing the soul and spirit?

We stop over at Dijon to break the journey from Paris to Lausanne, and incidentally, to see the very remarkable tombs of the Burgundian princes — John the Fearless and Philip the Brave — and the Cathedral. The tombs we have just visited, and they are worth a day's stay. They date from the 14th Century, and the marble is painted and gilded, giving one a realization of the wealth of color in a medieval church. Color and music — how poor the world would be without them!

We shall spend the rest of August in Switzerland, going back to England via the Rhine and Holland, and sailing on the *Franconia* on Sept. 17th. Pleasant as travel is, I still am impatient to reach home. . . .

To Countess Cesaresco

SANTENA, (TORINO.) *August* 21, 1912

MY DEAR COUNTESS:

I send you this line of greeting from the country place of Cavour, who has been the cause of so much intellectual — and moral — enthusiasm to both of us.

I came here this noon from Turin in Marquis Visconti-Venosta's car, and I only regret that Mrs. Thayer is not here too. I left her and Margaret at the Hôtel de l'Europe. The Marquis, though suffering from rheumatism, is mentally intact, so that I have been listening to his reminiscences of many events with great interest. He seems to value my biography very highly, and when he said that my description of the 18th of April scene with Garibaldi was all that it should be — he having been present — I felt that satisfaction which you, as a historian, can understand.[1] . . .

To Judge Jeremiah Smith

At the Swan Hotel
Lucerne, *August* 28, 1912

Dear Judge Smith:

Letters from home give a pleasure that neither nature, art, nor historical associations can supply to travellers abroad. I am particularly glad to hear that you are all well — even though Jere, Jr., has not had good weather for yawling. Here — to my great comfort — there has been almost no heat. Cool weather, with frequent sprinkles and showers, have been the rule: but thus far we have missed only one thing — a view of the Matterhorn — on account of storm. . . .

I am sorry to hear that you have lost two classmates. Only today I have read in the London *Times* of the death of Dr. Horace Furness — one of the dearest of men, and a very kind friend to me for over thirty years. In his Freshman year, he roomed with Mrs. Thayer's grandparents — the Wm. Wares, so that on both sides, and for three generations, he has been near.

[1] The Marquis died in 1914, "the last of the great Cavourians," said Thayer.

We are on the homeward trail, which leads us up the Rhine and through Holland and Belgium to England. The trip has been most delightful — and much more — but I am impatient to drive into Berkeley Street and see your curtains up, and then to stop at No. 8. The first day at home, after travel, is incomparable. It makes you understand how Antæus felt when he touched Mother Earth. We are due on the *Franconia*, Sept. 25 or 26. . . .

To Countess Cesaresco

GROSVENOR HOTEL, CHESTER
Sept. 15, 1912

MY DEAR COUNTESS:

Here we are, almost at the jumping off point and at the end of our wonderful trip. Wonderful, indeed, it has been; renewing for me so many old memories and adding other sights and impressions which are almost as precious as the old. The only lack was Venice, which I should like never to miss when we come to Europe.

This afternoon we have walked round the walls of Chester, and in the course of our walk Mrs. Thayer was delighted to find, near the Bridge Gate, the quarters which she and her parents occupied on her first visit here as a little child. How these unexpected reminders of childhood stir us, and rejuvenate!

I am taking home a large bundle of impressions, opinions, observations, which I have had little time to classify here. In general, it seems to me that Europe is hurrying quite as fast as America is towards radical — perhaps violent — changes: but I do not forget that the conservatism of mankind is always under-rated, so that it will probably upset calculations as to the much feared revolution.

A week ago, when we drove out of Charing Cross Station, I looked up at the windows and wished that we might find you still there. We had four frigid days in London, and then we stopped at Oxford and Leamington on our way hither. Yesterday, a motor car made Warwick, Stratford and Kenilworth possible. Is there any other shrine in the world to compare with Shakespeare's birthplace? . . .

To supplement these letters, a few extracts from the diary which Thayer kept of this, his last trip to Europe, may be added, because of their impressions or reflections.

A few days at Windermere and Derwentwater, Bowness and Keswick:

June 8. 'Gray, raw day: storm threatening. "A very fine day, sir," says Landlady. "Yer lucky, sir, in having such weather for your trip," says Boots. "It couldn't be better, sir," says Head Waiter. Such is English Veracity.' At Grasmere, Wordsworth's early home Dove Cottage was visited: 'Dark, dank little house. Stone floors downstairs. . . . Frugal, almost *poor* dwelling: yet out of this came more than out of all the castles and mansions of England a hundred years ago.' At Holyrood, *June* 14; 'The Queen's tiny room where Rizzio was murdered impressed me most. Except the Audience Hall, the quarters are small. The moral is written plainly here, that misfortune covers the sins of a woman, if she be beautiful and a queen.' Apropos of the Castle, 'The whole place shows how rough a life the old kings and queens lived.' At the ruins of Fountain Abbey; 'the vastness of the buildings and the beauty of many of the fragments of architecture are very striking. I was reminded of the Baths of Caracalla by the extent of the monkery. The Normans of the first half century after the Conquest were indeed mighty builders.'

At London: *June* 22. 'Republican Convention at Chicago nominates Taft: Roosevelt bolts — parting of the ways. If it means destruction of Rep. Party — well, indeed.'

June 23. 'Mass meeting of Hunger Procession in Park. These palaces will be no stronger than tissue paper, if Plebs really go frantic.'

June 24. 'After luncheon went to the British Museum. Spent most of the time in Elgin Marbles Room. Egyptian collection much richer than 20 years ago. What eternal impassivity is on the faces of the Kings! — As if they had looked clean through life and were unmoved by the upshot of it.'

June 26. 'Two hours at the National Gallery, which has been enlarged and rearranged .... I got intense satisfaction from the Sir Joshuas — all one wall of a large room devoted to them .... I went down to Kensington and called on Countess (Countess Martinengo). Mallock there; Humphry Ward came. M. not responsive, — bad eyes, without more soul in them than in two bullets. Pleasant talk with Countess.'

June 27. Visit to Lady Agatha Russell at Hindhead at the top of the Surrey hills. 'Lady Agatha Russell, a little woman in the sixties, with short iron gray hair, a flat hat, and simple dress — met us with her car. Motored 6 or 7 miles — passing borders of Sussex and Hampshire, and back to Surrey. To her place, Rezeldene, Hindhead, at the top of the Surrey hills. Fine views to south over Sussex Downs. Delightful two hours with Lady Agatha — recollection of her father. Many precious paintings and relics. Lady A. took us to the station. I parted from her with great regret. Very sympathetic — perfect thoroughbred. Back by fast train. Reached hotel at 8.15 ... Lord

Morley invited me to call on him at Whitehall, at 2.30, but the trip to Surrey prevented.'

June 29. Went to South Kensington Museum. 'About 15 Turners — including Hastings, Mount St. Michael, Yarmouth, Venice. A wonderful imagination — as far above all other landscapists as Shakespeare is above all other poets. I pity the dull who are blind to his incantations. . . . Portrait of J. Swift — unpleasant face, "pop" eyes. Several fine Landseers. . . . Characteristic Blake — incredible, but somehow true. Tiresome Burne-Jones and Rossettis. Every year, the inherent affectation of that tribe impresses me more and more.'

July 3. 'At 5 to House of Commons; found Sir Henry Norman, '81, who got a seat on the members floor. Prime Minister Asquith was concluding his speech on Clause One of the Home Rule Bill. A sturdy Englishman, of medium height; shaven face, ruddy face; silvery hair; strong features. He spoke in a pleasant voice, no orating; as courteously as became the great firmness with which he stated his intentions. He faced the Opposition: sometimes rested his hands — leaning forward a little — on the box at the end of the table in front of him, sometimes took hold of the lapels of his coat. All very easy, but wonderfully poised, quite undisturbed by the Tory jeers and snarls.

Austen Chamberlain — a tall, slim supercilious man, with the idiotic monocle, and the dress and air of a dandified man about town of forty, tried to reply. He churned up a passion of vituperation, shook his fist — and suddenly, in the midst of it all — had to stop and look at his notes in order to see what to say next, the most foolish position I ever saw a speaker in. But his colleagues cried 'Hear! Hear!' just as if the passion and vilification were a genuine outburst.

July 4. 'Eve. By invitation of Seaverns to Fourth of July Dinner of the American Society at Savoy Hotel . . . Principal speeches by Whitelaw Reid — dapperly venerable in white hair and Van Dyke beard; and Chauncey Depew — a bald, chin-chopper man of nearly 80; who talked for half an hour or more, and hit his audience in the right spot all the time. . . .

July 26. Rouen. 'To the Tour de Jeanne d'Arc — all that remains of Philippe Auguste's Château. Tiny cell in which Joan is said to have been confined from May 9, 1431, when she was tortured, to May 30, when she was burnt. Of her exploit it may be said "this is unique." At the corner of the market place, we saw a stone marking the spot where she was burned. A perpetual shame to churchmen and laymen.'

July 27. 'Reached St. Germain-en-Laye about 12.30. Lunched at Pavilion Henri IV on terrace. Magnificent view; prices to match. Two miles thro' park. A refuge out of all relation to the worth of James II and his tribe in their exile. On to Paris, which we entered by the Bois de Boulogne. As we passed Suresnes and Longchamps, I thought of my excursions there, to write poetry on the river bank, or to see the races 37 years ago. How different life has been from what I dreamed it! What a blessing that it must not be lived over just as it was. From the Arc de Triomphe down the Champs Elysées, Paris had her old allure — immediate appeal to the senses.'

'One bit of humor, seen on wayside tavern: "Assurance contre la soif."'

July 28. 'After luncheon we drove down to Napoleon's Tomb. Say what they will, the Frenchmen all thrill there, when they see the battle flags, and think of the man in the colossal porphyry sarcophagus.'

July 29. 'I tried to find my old quarters in Rue Charlot, near l'Arc de l'Etoile: failed. New streets appear to have been cut through that quarter. Then looked for Rue Billant; now Rue Washington. No. 26, as of old, great archway leading into an inner court on which are a dozen houses. M. Mennequin's was the last but one (or two) from the farther end. I tried to conjure back the W. R. T. who went there to school in the winter and spring of 1875.'

July 31. 'B., T. and I drove to the Carnavalet Museum. Concentrated attention on the Revolution and Napoleon rooms. The relics of Marie Antoinette bring her awful experiences very near. Suffering hallows — stones — say what we will, the victims of cruelty — though they were cruel themselves at first — bring this truth home. — Bastille relics. Autographs and documents of the men of the Terror. — Rousseau's inkstand, the size and shape of an egg: but had it been the crater of Vesuvius, he could not have drawn more fiery fluid from it.'

August 1. 'I went to the Louvre . . . Meissonier seemed to me to be already dwindling, in comparison with Dow and the other Dutchmen. Corot often shirks — paints merely a blur with some luminous interpolations, and lets it go at that, like a man who has one good story, which he repeats *ad nauseam*. But at his best, the old fellow is delightful. He added a new note to the painting of foliage and floating clouds and luminous sky.' . . .

'P.M. We all went to Conciergerie. M. A.'s [Marie Antoinette's] armchair, covered with red plush, and her crucifix, — ebony with ivory Christ — used on the scaffold. Guide pointed out door on floor above to cell in which Ney spent his last night. What an insult — a truly degenerate Bourbon indignity — heaped on the Bravest of the Brave.'

August 2. . . . . 'Then to Pantheon. We did not attempt to study the mural paintings. Chavannes has several, with the usual appearance of milk having been spilt over the surface. . . The crypt is very unsatisfactory. Tombs placed in cells, which can be seen only through a small opening. Many rods of V. Hugo's funeral wreaths. I would have put laurel on Zola's tomb, if it had been possible. His courage in the Dreyfus Affair was the best deed done in France in our time. . . . On the Pantheon's steps is Rodin's "Penseur" — a naked prize-fighter, with great knobs of muscles and protruding tendons and sinews, a forehead about two inches high. The best possible *reductio ad absurdum* of Rodin's chaotic sense of art.'

August 3. 'To the Luxembourg. Best paintings there by two Americans — Sargent's Carmencita and Whistler's portrait of his Mother. The Impressionists look like mockeries. — Rodin's portrait busts are vigorous, with a certain barbarian quality. Most of the celebrities of the last generation are visibly obsolescent.'

August 7. To Versailles. 'The Hall of Mirrors brought Jan. 18, 1871, to mind. How Bismarck must have gloated there!' . . .

August 12. The Castle of Chillon, Lake Geneva: 'A woman guide showed us over the Castle, which has been restored since H. O. A. [Harry Apthorp] and I saw it in 1886. Then Bonnivart's dungeon was the chief sight; now the entire building, as an example of medieval fortress castle, is most interesting. Thank heaven, the conditions which created it have passed away. The slum and the brutalized industrial proletariat are nowise so bad as the medieval tyrant and his troops of helpless serfs. The Canton of Vaud should raise a statue to Byron, who started interest in Chillon. I should like to meet him, Vol-

taire and Rousseau on some of these beautiful roads.'

August 13. Lausanne. 'Statue to Major Davel — Vaudois patriot, executed by the Bernese. Fine sayings of his for mottoes — have the Prescott of Lexington ring. "What we are doing here is not the affair of a day"'

The climax of this trip of 1912, for Thayer, as already recounted above in the letter to Countess Cesaresco, was the visit to Santena, Italy, where he was the guest of the Marquis Visconti-Venosta whose house was the former country place of Cavour, and where every stone and wall carried some reminder of the illustrious maker of Italy. It was an experience of endless interest and much charm.

'Cavour in my thoughts. Wishes that Mamma and Carissima [Mrs. Peacock] could know that I had endured and finished the work, and that this visit to Santena was a visible sign that men found it good.'

Thayer was now ready to let the return voyage begin. At Lucerne he heard of the death of Dr. Horace Furness, whom he had known well in the Philadelphia days: 'A very mellow and tender heart, rich mind. He made me feel that I was his friend ever since 1882. Memorable Sunday spent with him at Wallingford in 1885. Now he knows the truth in regard to immortality — the poignant riddle, which we used often to discuss. "We shall not know," he said to me, "till Azrael closes our eyelids." If there is meeting beyond, I am sure that Mr. Furness asked first for his wife — of whom he was passionately fond — and then for Shakespeare.'

At Calais, September 8: 'Mamma died thirty years ago today. Shall I ever see her again? . . . Looked at Rodin's monument, "The Burghers of Calais," just opposite the hotel. Six badly modelled men, in contortions, and giving way to despair — an extraordinary commemoration of

patriots who had the courage to go out and sacrifice their lives to save their native city.'

Then on to London, with another visit to the Abbey, 'where the ugliness of the Poet's Corner statues is mostly beyond belief'; to Oxford and Stratford with glimpses of their treasures; then to Liverpool where Thayer has this entry in his diary:

September 17, 1912. 'Various shopping till luncheon. Thought much of Papa and Mamma, beginning their married life here. Wished I knew where his offices were.'

September 24. — 'For me the happiest moment will be tomorrow when we furl our sails in Cambridge.'

Sept. 25. — 'Dear shabby old 8 Berkeley St . . . So we are at home again, after a wonderful trip and — for me — almost constant nervous torture.'

One or two letters written after his return to his study in 8 Berkeley Street will serve to complete the account of the European trip of 1912.

To Arthur S. Pier

CAMBRIDGE: *Sept.* 27, 1912

MY DEAR PIER:

In London, I looked about for some books which might remind you of my gratitude for your help on the *Magazine* long after you have forgotten the drudgery, and I concluded that this old edition of 'Gil Blas' might serve the purpose.

At any rate, it carries to you my thanks and best wishes. Remember that I shall always be at your service in a similar emergency.

Ever very truly yours

WM. R. THAYER

To Judge Jeremiah Smith

CAMBRIDGE, MASS. *Sept.* 27, 1912

Our great Leader has taught us to scorn Nature Fakers. So I shall wear the Bull Moose emblem only between the hours of one and three A.M.; because the only experience I have had with moose was at that time one night when I was camping near Moosehead Lake — many, many years ago. I have no reason to suppose that they are active at any other hour.

Whenever you meet me on Berkeley Street at that time you will see — moon permitting — that emblem in my buttonhole.

It's good to be at home! I tried four times yesterday to see you, but visitors came in as I was starting. Better luck today!

From September, 1912, when he returned from Europe to September, 1913, when he began in earnest his next important undertaking, there was a lull in Thayer's activity, an enjoyment of well-earned leisure for reading, a period in which many signs of public approbation poured in upon him. Now and then a letter to a correspondent in Europe or America, recalling some pleasant episode in his recent trip, noting some piece of good fortune that had come to a friend, discussing books, sketching possible plans for future work. But we will let the letters tell the story.

To Lady Agatha Russell

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
December 16, 1912

MY DEAR LADY AGATHA,

Mrs. Thayer and I send you, instead of a card of the Season's Greetings, the latest volume of our neighbour

and friend, Dr. Crothers. He is the quaintest of our essayists, but behind the quaintness and the seeming whimsicality there is a nature that loves truth and dwells with it.

I have been enjoying lately some volumes of the Hon. G. W. E. Russell, who is, I suppose, a kinsman of yours. He has made a treasury of the wit, humour, fun and bonhommie of Britain in the 19th century, with an occasional borrowing from us: for several of the stories which he gives as originating over there have their counterparts here. Sometimes, he seems to me to do that sort of essay better than it has been done since Thackeray in the 'Roundabout Papers.'

I have also laughed over Max Beerbohm's parodies in 'A Christmas Garland.' They are more than skits. The parody on Galsworthy, for instance, pricks the bubble of much pseudo-altruism.

How fast the world moves. I won't say advances! For who can tell what is coming out of the Balkan upheaval? Old England is carrying a tremendous load — and so badly adjusted, too — but I hope that she will not stumble.

To H. Nelson Gay

CAMBRIDGE, *Jan.* 12, 1913

We had a satisfactory holiday season at home, and Boston was invaded by half a dozen learned societies which convoked for four or five days. The chief feature was the address of T. R. as President of the American Historical Association, who took for his text, 'Make History Interesting.' In the course of it he threw a bouquet to Thayer's 'Cavour,' so that we cannot regard him as heterodox — at least in this gospel. I afterwards lunched with him at Rhodes' and had several heart-to-heart talks. Say what you will, he is a wonderful creature:

and as it is the business of the historian to see how historical personages are equipt, I enjoy studying him — though I don't vote for him.

'Cavour' has gone into its fourth thousand, selling during the holidays better than any of the new 'serious' books. It has also brought to its author those outward signs of approbation which are pleasant, and not harmful, unless a man is a fool.

Meanwhile I miss my Great Companion, whose life I tried to tell, and I can't settle down to any new work. Some lectures for Cornell busy, but don't yet absorb me. . . .

To Countess Cesaresco

CAMBRIDGE, MASS'TTS: *Feb.* 25, 1913

DEAR COUNTESS:

You probably had from Mrs. Thayer a letter acknowledging your Christmas letter and the newspapers. We enjoyed *all*, and I rejoice to find that your work is bringing you that popular recognition in Italy which ought to have come years ago. Say what we will, recognition is sweet — not as a sop to vanity, but as a tangible sign that the circle of our fellowship — our sympathetic contacts with our kind — has broadened. Every writer who is worth counting knows how far his achievement falls below his aim, and so he must have a very genuine humility, and a sort of surprised gratitude that his work has pleased those whose judgment he values.

I have been reading George Meredith's letters with much interest — tho' there are too many of them. They confirm my suspicion — raised by the novels, which I took in a great draught twenty odd years ago — that his mannerism was largely deliberate, and not, as I hoped, in-

voluntary. That augurs ill for his permanence, in spite of the many splendid flashes, that lighten up his obscurities, and his amazing penetration. His letters to Morley are direct, genuine and noble throughout.

Yesterday, Bergson was here. I heard him lecture in our University theatre in the afternoon, and met him at a reception in the evening. Have you seen him? He expounded his philosophy with beautiful clarity and much urbane charm; but I am not yet prepared to mount his aeroplane — I remember Icarus. Sunday, a Bulgarian stated the case for the Balkan allies with convincing zeal. The other night, Tagore — a Hindu, who speaks English remarkably well — read translations of his poems. Thursday, I am to dine with your young English poet, Alfred Noyes. So you see, our remote corner of the world has its cosmopolitan gleams. . . .

When the commencement season of 1913 arrived, Harvard elected Thayer an Overseer and he was asked to come to several universities to receive academic palms. Western Reserve, Brown, Williams and Harvard all bestowed upon him their highest honors and many pleasant things were said by the way, agreeable to remember. It was an altogether exceptional harvest, four degrees in a single month.[1]

[1] As early as April, 1912, President Thwing had informed Thayer that Western Reserve University would like to bestow upon him the degree of Doctor of Laws at the coming Commencement. Thayer had written in reply (April 23, 1912): 'I thank you heartily for the great honor Western Reserve University holds out to me. I should indeed be proud to have my name on the list of your honorary graduates. I have always regarded Western Reserve as an authentic fragment of Plymouth Rock planted on the shore of Lake Erie, to perpetuate there those American ideals which you and I believe in. Above all, I am much gratified to know that you personally think well of my work.'

Owing to the trip to Europe to which he was already definitely committed, Thayer was not able to be present at the Commencement of 1912. But Western Reserve renewed the invitation for the following year and Thayer attended the

It is doubtful if any scholar has received so many within so short a period.

Two entries in Thayer's diary announce the coming of this wonderful June harvest:

April 11, 1913. 'Last night, at the dinner of the Harvard Class Secretaries, President Lowell told me that the Corporation and Overseers had voted to give me the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters. This is the rarest crown that can come to me, in America or anywhere else. I am much touched, for sometimes Mother Harvard seems to me a very real person, and to hear her 'well done' — especially after the long years of official nonchalance — made me quiver. If only *they* know, who prepared my youth and sacrificed much for my sake, and — best of all — gave me unstinted affection.'

May 26, 1913. 'Today came a note from President Garfield of Williams College, offering me a L.H.D. degree, if I can be present at Commencement on June 25th. Gratefully accepted. This makes the fourth honorary degree awaiting me this June, if I am present to receive it. Western Reserve was offered last year, and Williams was suggested — but we went to Europe instead. This year — Western Reserve, Harvard, Brown, and Williams have sent their offers. I am happy — the more happy because it pleases Bess. I hope to take them all — but above all, Harvard's. Ever since I was an undergraduate, I have worn her colors, as the Young Knight wore his lady's, and I have done what I could — so little — to battle in her behalf. I have written no line nor spoken a word about her that might injure her. Her best have been America's

Commencement of 1913, made the oration to the graduating class, and was given the degree. Thus Western Reserve was the first university to recognize him in this way.

Yale bestowed the degree of Litt.D. upon Thayer in 1914.

best. I should rejoice to be numbered, years hence, among the humblest of them.'

The following letters record these happy and gratifying experiences, the reception of the academic plaudits extended to one who had played his part so well in the spheres of scholarship and letters which it is the highest privilege of universities to cherish and honor.

To Charles F. Thwing

CAMBRIDGE, MASS^TTS: *June* 13, 1913

We reached home before noon today, and our minds are still full of the delight of our visit to Western Reserve. We are very grateful to you and Mrs. Thwing for your perfect hospitality, and I shall always hold precious the official approval which your University bestowed upon me. I hope that it is not a case where distance has lent enchantment to the value of my work.

My only regret was that, owing to a chill and the sleepless night on the train, I could not go through the entire program which you had provided, and that, consequently, I was so mum and unresponsive a guest. You can't imagine how humiliating it is to be held up unexpectedly in that way.

It's a great satisfaction to know *visually* your surroundings — the beautiful Bellflower Road and the University precincts, with all their evidence of solidity and regard for symmetry. If envy were permitted, I should envy you in your position there, where you can not only direct but stimulate, year by year, a thousand or more young men and women, and thereby shape the future. You educators who have enthusiasm — and I have never understood how anyone could dare to be an educator without enthusiasm

— you have not only the constant satisfaction of doing what you prefer, but of seeing every day the results of your work. Long may you continue!

To Charles F. Thwing

CAMBRIDGE, *June* 26, 1913

I find your note, on returning from a short trip, and thank you heartily for it. Of course, Mother Harvard's 'well done' — unexpected as it was — was very dear to a Harvard son. Her habit is to praise her own sparingly — until they are either very old — and possibly deaf — or dead. So her honor bestowed upon a youth of fifty-four has the added pleasure of surprise.

But this in no way dims my gratitude to Western Reserve, or my pride in being placed first on her honorary roll.

Mrs. Thayer and I speak often of our too brief visit to you, and of your and Mrs. Thwing's hospitality, and of the great dignity of your Commencement ceremonies.

We trust that we shall have the satisfaction of having you both under our roof before long.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

MAGNOLIA, MASS^TTS: *July* 5, 1913

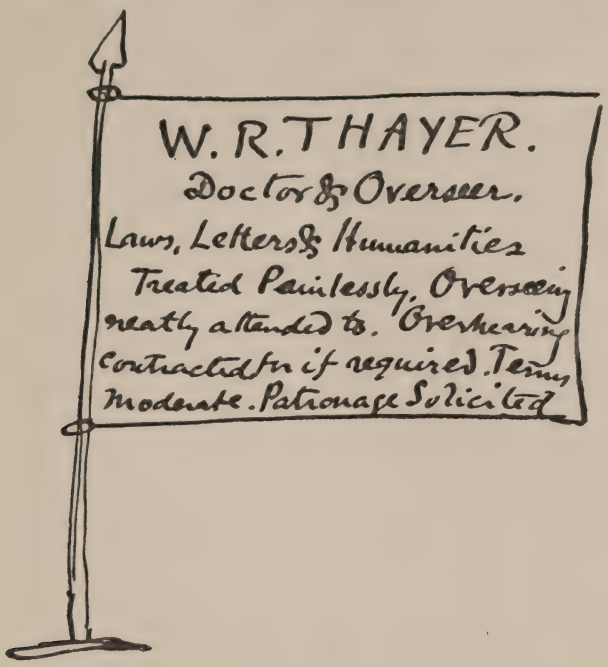
DEAR MARGARET:

. . . When you walk into Berkeley Street in the Autumn, you will see at Number 8 the following sign.[1]

This is the result of a shower of honorary degrees which poured upon us during the Commencement season — when we were unprovided with either umbrellas or mackintoshes. We — Bess and I — went to Western Reserve University, at Cleveland, and were made LL.D.; to Brown,

[1] See opposite page.

which planted the hood of a Litt.D. on our unprotected shoulders; to Harvard — best of all — which duplicated



the Litt.D. and elected us Overseer; and finally to Williams, which thought the title of Doctor of Humanities suited our complexion. Four in one season is, they say, a new record.

I rejoice, because this all means that 'Cavour' is making its way — the fifth edition is just going to press — and because Bess has 'a ribbon to stick in her coat' after those long years of ordeal with the broken down biographer.

Best remembrances to Michael. Don't take your birthday seriously.[1]

[1] In a letter to Harrison S. Morris, dated August 27, 1913, Thayer says: 'My four honorary degrees were, of course, a satisfaction. Only a fool pretends to

To Charles Wendell Townsend

MANGOLIA, MASS., *Aug.* 19, 1913

DEAR CHARLIE TOWNSEND:

I have been spending a delightful afternoon with your 'Sand Dunes.' With what a 'lover's eye' you see not only the beauties, but every passing change of Nature: and how admirably you describe them all, for the benefit of those of us who seem to walk blindfold among them! I congratulate you heartily!

Ever faithfully yours

WM. R. THAYER

In October, 1913, Thayer gave a series of lectures at Cornell University on three of the lesser figures of the Italian Risorgimento, Manin, Ricasoli and Crispi. These had been arranged as early as January. While in Ithaca Mr. and Mrs. Thayer were the guests of President and Mrs. White. These lectures were repeated at Smith College in May, 1914.

To Countess Cesaresco

MAGNOLIA, MASS'TTS: *Aug.* 1, 1913

MY DEAR COUNTESS:

. . . Speaking of lectures, I have been — and am — at work on studies of Manin, Ricasoli and Crispi — three types of Risorgimento leaders — which I am to deliver at Cornell University in October. If plagiarism were reputable, I would crib your two fine essays on Manin and Ricasoli. How good they are, read and re-read, after many years.

scorn such official approbation when it comes, unsought and unexpected, from sources so various. But I don't find that I am any better, or handsomer, or wiser, or less subject to nervous quakes, than I was before the four hoods and the string of initials were bestowed.'

Mrs. Thayer and I spent part of June travelling to and fro to receive honorary degrees — of which I collected four. The Doctor of Letters from Harvard was of course the blue ribbon — Harvard's official approval has a rank above and apart in America — and I was particularly pleased when President Lowell, in conferring my degree, referred to me as 'historian and poet, whose pages glow with the dramatic scenes of the Union of Italy and the achievements of Cavour.'

For I have always felt that the historian — and every other true *maker* — not excepting mathematicians or biologists — must have something of the poet's quality.

It was also gratifying to be elected an Overseer of Harvard University — an office to which five graduates are chosen each year, and which, as the electorate is the general body of graduates, represents popular opinion.

I report these matters to you, not out of vanity, but as indications that Cavour has become a name to conjure with here. Indeed, my friend Rhodes, our chief historian of the United States, tells me, half-jokingly, that my good fortune consisted in discovering such a subject as Cavour. . . .

To Andrew Dickson White

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
November 2, 1913

We reached home on time yesterday afternoon, after a comfortable journey.

I wish I could tell you how much, and for how many reasons, we are grateful to you for our visit to Ithaca. It was a great pleasure to address your University public, tho' chastening for me to remember that Goldwin Smith had set the standard for your expectations. I shall never

forget the comprehensiveness of Cornell, the beauty of its situation, the well-ordered arrangements of its many buildings, the regard for preserving the fine views and the noble trees. To tell you the truth, I came away regretting that Harvard lacks so many of these advantages, partly owing to the flatness of Cambridge, partly to the encroachments of the city on the College, and much more to the lack of foresight and of taste in the earlier generations of our Governing Boards.

But most of all, dear Dr. White, let me say frankly, I enjoyed the friendship of seeing you, of hearing you, and of coming to know you better. Wherever I looked at Cornell, I saw some part of *you* embodied.

Are you not one of the most fortunate of men to have had not only the great vision, but the tact and strength to realize it, so that now in your maturity you have the satisfaction of beholding this visible embodiment of the dreams of your youth and prime? So few men are permitted to do that! And how often the ideals of youth prove, when realized, sadly different from what was expected.

But you have planted on the sunny slopes of Ithaca the best of institutions — because, to my thinking, there is no other institution now possible which compares in usefulness and in promise with a university vitalized in all its organs.

And in addition to all this, you have accomplished as scholar, citizen and diplomatist results to satisfy the most ambitious.

I cannot resist saying to you in the flesh what our Yankee reticence usually stifles altogether, or says only long after the benefactor is beyond reach of our gratitude. Benefactor you are! Long may you continue in health to do your manifold work!...

Since the appearance of *Cavour*, Thayer had been mulling over in his mind the problem of the next theme to which he should devote himself; in no hurry, however, to decide. By the fall of 1913 he had found it, the *Life and Letters of John Hay*, a task which was to occupy his time until its completion two years later — 'Hay-making,' he called it. The early steps in this new enterprise are indicated in the following letters.

To John T. Morse, Jr.

MAGNOLIA, MASS^TTS: *Aug.* 19, 1913

May I make bold to apply to you — *pater primus* of us biographers — for advice?

Houghton & Mifflin urge me to write a life of John Hay, which will be published first with illustrations and then take its place in the American Statesmen Series. I shall have free access to the three volumes of Hay's Letters privately printed by Mrs. Hay in 1908, and presumably she would be ready to answer questions. I should hope from Hay's fellow workers when he was in the State Department to get much assistance.

My question is this: Do you think that such a volume on Hay, prepared now, before all his private papers and diaries are released, would be of sufficient value to justify itself? Hay as 'statesman' flourished during the last eight years of his life only — from 1897 to 1905: but he happened to have a hand in several most critical national and international episodes. Would such a statement as a biographer like me could hope to make from the materials in sight be more than provisional?

Hay interests me as a subject because he seems to have been a glorified amateur, who touched life at several points, and to describe his evolution would be an attractive task.

But of course, I don't want to attempt it if, from the nature of the case, the biography would be predestined to failure.

Friends say, 'Stick to Italy, the field in which you have some authority.' But I have done with the Risorgimento — at least for the present; and, for change, I should like a good American subject. The theory, held by some of our pedants, that a man must never go out of a small specialty, seems to me as absurd as it would be to insist that Sargent must always paint Jews and black poodles because he scored a success with Wertheimer. Of course, I do not contemplate a biographical history, like the 'Cavour,' which meant twenty years or more of study and meditation and soaking in; but I should like to do a half length, or vignette, of some American, and Hay strikes me as the best of the recent public men who is still unchronicled. . . .

To Worthington C. Ford

MAGNOLIA, MASS^TTS: *Sept.* 2, 1913

What a sailor you must be to write such a letter (calligraphy and all) at sea. But most of us couldn't write it even on land.

So far as I have been able to form an opinion, I quite agree with you as to Hay. He was a glorified amateur; but those seven years of his in the State Department happened to be epoch-making, and so he inherits the interest that attaches to them. My problem will be to discover how much he really controlled events, and how much he followed the suggestions of stronger men. Your hint of a probable Egeri*us* (or was it an Egeria?) doesn't surprise me.

The subject interests me — not because Hay was great, or really a statesman, but because his career had those

strongly contrasted vicissitudes which make a man interesting. Then, too, the psychological puzzle whets my curiosity and challenges a solution.

You say, 'But after Cavour?' Of course, I have thought of that. But unless I am to remain idle the rest of my life, I shall have to tackle subjects far inferior to Cavour. I shall never have time for another work on that scale, even if the subject were forthcoming. But I regard a biographer as the counterpart of the portrait painter. The latter doesn't have to wait for transcendent or handsome or virtuous men in order to make a fine portrait. So with biography: if the biographer has the skill, and succeeds, he can produce a first rate biography of a second (or third) rate sitter. I would never waste time on a subject that did not appeal to me, and, in the case of a public man, did not possess historical significance. I assume, also, that there will be sufficient material to enable me to make a presumptive likeness.

Many persons ask me to continue the history of the Risorgimento down to the completion of unification. But the years between 1861 and 1870 are full of disgusts; sectional feuds of extreme virulence; demagogues — the Italian equivalents of Thad Stevens and Ben Butler (only more so); worthy but unsuccessful efforts by Cavour's successors who couldn't stretch his bow; intrigues, royal, republican, papal, French, personal; no central figure or unifying force; Garibaldi running amuck; Mazzini — Cassandra pouring forth baleful prophecies; generals beaten in battles by land and admirals in battles by sea; — *Caro Mio*, how can any sane historian wish to plunge into that muddle? Especially when not one tenth of the vital evidence is accessible, or will be for many years.

So I welcome an American subject, which presents no

such disgusts, and has the attraction of novelty. If I don't stick to biography, I must try my luck in fiction, and concoct — under an inviolable pseudonym — a best seller or two that will make your hair stand on end and destroy your sleep. Do you want that? . . .

To Charles F. Thwing

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
Oct. 5, 1913

Your letter comes opportunely, for I have you on my list of friends to be victimized in my Hay venture. It was good fortune for me that Mrs. Hay saw you before I had written you, because that shows there was no collusion between us.

I don't know her personally: all the more reason, therefore, that she should be predisposed by what you say of her husband's prospective biographer. For it is essential that I should have her confidence — and her coöperation — up to the point where it leaves me unhampered. Of course, she will discount your magnification of W. R. T.; but I hope she will still believe that he is a writer of some experience who earnestly desires to draw a true portrait of John Hay.

. . . The difficulty of the undertaking piques me; so does the apparent unusualness in Hay's psychology. How came it that a man who had settled into a life of chronic elegant leisure should suddenly at 60 become Secretary of State and arbiter of world issues? There is my problem.

If you have ten minutes to spare, I shall be grateful if you will tell me briefly your impression of Hay, and also inform me who the *likeliest* persons are in Cleveland to whom I can apply for any facts or recollections. Anything you may confide I shall hold as confidential, unless I have

your permission to quote you when I come to write the book. My first need is to get as many-sided an impression of Hay as I can from those who knew him. I can't write about anybody until I succeed in resuscitating him.

Please do not hurry to reply to my general questionnaire. You are very busy, and it is an imposition to trouble you at all. When you come East next, perhaps we may have the good fortune of seeing you and Mrs. Thwing, and then I shall apply the biographer's suction pump to you as painlessly as possible. . . .

Thayer's brother, Frederick, Harvard '78, died on September 17, 1913. Concerning him the following entry under that date, is found in Thayer's diary:

'On September 17, in the evening, just after falling asleep, Fred died. He had had a happy summer; had taken Bess and Margaret on a motor trip to Niagara and Canada, which lasted nearly a month; he had seemed better than usual, and was looking forward to moving home from Cohasset. Then the heart stopped painlessly, in the twinkling of an eye. He was fifty-nine years old, and as invalidism or periodic attacks of angina pectoris lay ahead of him, and his physique was much older than his age, that sudden release was most blessed. But I have felt lonely, as if all of my generation had gone. Fred had many fine qualities which I envied. In sympathy and kindness nobody surpassed him. His smile sprang from his profound good nature. He never forgot to serve others first. But he was like flint towards meanness of all kinds. Quite unintellectual, he yet showed great interest in my work, and was proud of the honors last June. For years he had been most generous, showering gifts on each of us, and especially on Margaret.'

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
Dec. 12, 1913

. . . The late Conte Camillo di Cavour has presented the Thayers with an addition to the house in which the distinguished historian has shelfroom for 3000 more books and 300 square feet of floor for pamphlets, papers, furniture and other overflow. . . .

Did I write you that I have undertaken to 'do' the volume on John Hay for the American Statesmen Series? It promises to be interesting work for me, but I can't tell whether I can make a book that readers will like. I have begun the process of getting information. Unless you try it, you won't realize how exciting and tantalizing it is. The biographer is like an intelligent cork-screw; he sees a row of bottles filled with the best vintages of information, and he longs to extract the corks — but some of them are driven in tighter than a railroad spike and riveted on the other end.

The other day I went down to Providence — Hay graduated at Brown in 1858 — and among other *trouvailles* I found his first sweetheart, now a stunning lady of 80, as bright as you will be at her age. I hadn't the effrontery to ask her to let me see his letters, but she mentioned them and said there was nothing in them of general interest. . . .

To Henry Adams

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *December* 23, 1913

MY DEAR SIR:

Mrs. Hay writes me that she has been talking with you about the biography of Secretary Hay, which I have undertaken to write for the American Statesmen Series. I had been much interested by his versatile talents and varied

career, and, after reading the three volumes of his privately printed Letters, I decided to see what I could make of his life. But it was evident that for the later years — the years which put him among the Statesmen — there was one indispensable source — yourself.

I had planned to go to Washington later in the Spring, when I should have had time to cover these later years (1897-1905) sufficiently to be able to ask vital questions. But Mrs. Hay tells me that you are likely to go to Europe in March, and your brother, Mr. Charles F. Adams, advises me to come down now on a prospecting trip. So I expect to be in Washington on January 14th, and to stay four or five days — it being impossible for me to start sooner. I hope that this date will suit you.

Of course, the success of the biography, so far as material goes, depends on what I can collect from Mr. Hay's friends and associates: for the official record of such recent transactions will not be open for many years to come. But I have learned to look for the facts of contemporary history not in the official records but in the testimony of those who have made it and have confided their plans and acts to friends. So that, in spite of the grave doubts expressed by Rhodes and other friends whom I discussed the project with, I still have hopes of knowing the truth in regard to Mr. Hay's policies while he was Secretary of State. The fact that some of these friends fear that my undertaking will fail, serves rather as a spur.

I need not say that I shall be most grateful not only for whatever information you may give, but for advice and suggestions.

May I venture to ask you to let me have a copy of your 'Education of Henry Adams,' which I have known in fragments and long wished to possess? I am told that it con-

tains matters which must be important to Hay's biographer.

I am reading 'Mont St. Michel and Chartres.' To say that our time has produced nothing else like it is slight praise: for most of our products in history are the output of documentarians with the brains of conveyancers' clerks, and our art criticism is written by persons who suppose that a microphotographic study of Titian's brushwork can 'explain' Titian, and that architecture need have no more solid cause than the caprice or incompetence of the architect.

Excuse the length to which this letter has run. . . .

To John T. Morse, Jr.

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
Feb. 3, 1914

. . . I have begun Hay-making in earnest — tho' the 'Old Farmer's Almanach' doesn't recommend this as the season — and during a week in Washington last month I got much information, personal and political, about him.

He was not great, that is evident, but his attractive qualities, versatility and unusual range of vicissitudes ought to furnish the stuff for a lively biography.

Even if there were any other subject like Cavour *unpreëmpted*, I should be too old to undertake it. Ten-year-long tasks are not for me: but I should like to make two or three portraits — or, call them more modestly Kitcats — before I die. . . .

To Frederic Crowninshield

MAGNOLIA, MASS^TTS: *June* 23, 1914

You have got ahead of me. Ever since I came here, at the end of last week, fagged by the exertions of the Com-

mencement festivities, I have planned to send an inquiry for you to Stockbridge. In the winter I had a card from you from Taormina — but nothing wherefore, no further address — and so I began to wonder whether, like Wordsworth's bird, you had not become a 'Wandering Voice.'

All the news you send is good — especially that of the paintings. Did you sketch the strand of Giardini — below Taormina — where Garibaldi embarked to cross to Calabria? That is a view I should like to own, tho' for grandeur, commend to me Aspromonti as seen from Taormina.

I am busy on a life of John Hay, for the American Statesmen Series. You are a portrait painter, and so you can understand why a biographer finds many *sitters* most interesting who are not necessarily, as the world reckons, the greatest personages. Hay is a very engaging subject — versatile, vivacious, varied, victorious (how's that for alliteration?) and if I can make him live as I see him, he will attract the new generation. Incidentally, he had a part, — a very decisive part — in matters of world importance.

I must close now, in order to catch the train; but I will write soon again. Tonight, I have to preside at a baseball dinner given by the Taverners to the St. Botolphs. Life still has variety, even here, you see.

CHAPTER VII

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF JOHN HAY

1914–1915

The outbreak of the World War was a profound shock to Thayer. He like many others had felt in a general way that a conflict would come some day between European nations, that it was always immanent in conditions. But now a general possibility suddenly became a sharp and terrifying reality.

Thayer, a moralist to the core, a humanitarian in every fibre of his being, was outraged by the colossal iniquity of the war. Aglow with indignation at those who had caused it and at those who were their apologists or abettors, wherever and whoever they were, scornful of those who were indifferent or blind or timid in this momentous conjuncture of the world, resolute to do his utmost to instruct, to persuade, to inspirit his fellow-countrymen, he wrote books, pamphlets, newspaper articles, in which his historical knowledge, his dialectic power, his moral energy, his literary resourcefulness were all drawn upon, he made speeches wherever he could before large audiences and before small, a form of activity to which he was not accustomed and which was consequently a drain upon his vitality, he served on numerous committees, he joined leagues designed for this or that, in short he plunged into whatever war-work was open to him, heedless of the consequences. One of his duties, as he conceived, was, by personal letters, to encourage his friends abroad who were carrying burdens

of their own. His correspondence was large and was always appreciative, courageous, optimistic.

To a proper understanding of the letters which follow some knowledge of Thayer's political affiliations and principles is essential, for, as always, politics permeated the war and were a sometimes helpful, sometimes hurtful and humiliating feature of it. Thayer as a young man was a Republican. When he went to Philadelphia, shortly after graduation from Harvard, he became a member of the Union League Club. But he resigned from it and broke from the party because of the nomination of Blaine for the presidency. Removing to Massachusetts he became a friend, personal and political, of William E. Russell. He was an opponent of Protection, which he regarded as a source of great corruption in the national life. He was an advocate of free trade or at least of liberal tariff reform, and of civil service reform, and he hated all jingoism. He denounced the war with Spain and was a severe critic of all tendencies toward imperialism. In politics he called himself a Mugwump, an Independent. He neither liked nor trusted Senator Lodge and, although he was a friend of Roosevelt, he never voted for him. He was an admirer of Woodrow Wilson, voted for him in 1912, and warmly approved, in general, the course of his administration during its early months.

The war changed all this, as we shall see. The reasons will appear in the correspondence which follows.

Meanwhile the work upon which he had entered before the war broke out, the *Life and Letters of John Hay*, was carried on, as best it could be, amid the convulsions of the time, until it was completed.

To Walter Hines Page

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
Jan. 4, 1914

DEAR PAGE:[1]

We were much pleased to get your card of good wishes and remembrance, and I wondered how — with all that you have to busy you — you still found time to send greetings to your friends here. I need not tell you that we reciprocate those wishes for you — public and private *you* — and for your family. If Mrs. Thayer and Margaret have their way, we may leave a card on you and the Ambassadress some time during the summer — but that is not likely, because my work will keep me here, and, because — if it didn't — the fall in income from investments suggests economizing as our chief concern for the ensuing year.

Of course you get all the public news, and so you know that the country has taken with unexpected equanimity the new Tariff, the Income Tax, the Currency Law, and the Administration's strange attitude toward Mexico. How much more 'trust-busting,' and how many more threats to nationalize railroads, telephones and telegraphs, it will stand without nervous collapse, remains to be seen. I regret, personally, the evident lurch towards Socialism. If we tip that way a little farther, we may have T. R. running in 1916 as a Republican on a platform dedicated to saving private ownership of property and to promoting individual initiative.

But all speculation is futile; and I am neither a prophet nor even cousin of a clairvoyant. The general feeling is that Bryan queers Wilson's policy: and many of W's supporters — I among others — hope that, when the President has put through his cardinal measures, which

[1] Mr. Page had been appointed Ambassador to England in April, 1913.

require the solid backing of the Democratic Congress, he will find it possible to replace Bryan by a man who not only knows modern history and international diplomacy, but also possesses a proper sense of dignity. The country will not soon forget the Bryan-Vaudeville-Chautauqua improprieties.

After lying fallow for two years, I have undertaken to write a volume of John Hay for the American Statesmen Series. His varied career, versatility and charm interest me, and as I hope to be able to get from the inside the main facts about his Secretaryship, I may succeed in turning out a fair biography. Some friends suggest that after 'Cavour,' 'Hay' may be an anti-climax, but I regard the biographer as the twin of the portrait painter. You don't need to have a very great man as your subject in order to make (if you're lucky) an attractive painting. . . .

Mr. Choate has promised to show me Hay's letters to him, and in Washington, where I go next week, I am expected by Henry Adams and others who were on the inside during Hay's service at the State Department. If you hear anything really characteristic of his stay in England, please let me have it — if you have time. . . .

To Lady Agatha Russell

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS
August 19, 1914

DEAR LADY AGATHA,

Let me grasp your English hand across the sea, at this time when all of us who believe in the few fundamentals which our race has stood for are one.

In this household, we seize the newspapers, which come three times a day, for news of the victories we hope are coming. I had two days of terrible suspense, when there

seemed doubt lest England should hold back, that would have meant slow suicide for her.

Now, — with an English army in the field, — with that magnificent defence of Liège — which put back the Prussian advance a week — and with the likelihood that the Russian hosts are ready to batter on the Eastern gates of Prussia — there can be no sudden overthrow of France. Every day's delay adds to Germany's task.

I need not tell you that, except for some Germans of very questionable position, America is heart and soul against this desperate attempt of the military despotism centred at Berlin to subdue Liberal Europe — and not Europe only. No one here is fooled by the subterfuge 'Teuton against Slav.' And we all hope that the permanent results of this criminal war will be the destruction of the Prussian Moloch of Militarism.

What a glorious record Liège has made! I trust that the war will not strike down those dearest to you. If it should remember that no Englishman could die more nobly than in defence not only of England but of civilization. . . .

To Charles F. Thwing

MAGNOLIA, MASS^TTS: *Aug.* 31, 1914

Will you forgive my delay in thanking you for your letter about Hay? It came when I was in the mill-race of *Magazine* copy and proofs, and had to concentrate on them, or sink.

Your remarks about Hay will help me towards a final estimate. My question was tentative — for I have not yet reached the point where I should think of summing him up. A biographer, like a doctor, asks many questions, so as to make sure that he has covered all possibilities in his diagnosis.

This War — the Atrocious War — fills my thoughts most of the time. For absolute cynicism nothing in modern times equals the jeering repudiation by Kaiser and Chancellor of solemn treaty obligations. Only a 'word' — 'only a scrap of paper'! Well, we shall see. Of course, this was Bismarck's creed and practice, but he had the guile to disguise it a little. And, as if the Germans in Frederick and Bismarck had not the worst possible masters in international iniquity, they have been bitten by the superman mania of poor mad Nietzsche, and by Gobineau's theory of what constitutes a superior race.

Nothing more hollow than their Teuton against Slav pretext has ever been put forth. Of course, if Western Civilization were in danger of being submerged, and the Germans were sincere, they would have formed a league with France, England, Italy, Belgium and the smaller Western Powers, and declared a crusade against the Muscovite. Instead of that, they leap before war is declared to destroy England and France.

In this struggle, I see Feudalism — which is the Teutonic contribution to political systems — making what I hope will be its last stand. The German military despotism has long seen that it cannot forever flourish in competition with Anglo-Saxon and Latin democracy. William has bided his time till he felt sure that he could smite them both utterly.

If he wins, Democracy will be eclipsed, and our turn will come next. Our civilization will perish from an overdose of Prussic acid. But even so, men and peoples will gradually rally, and form coalitions and fight until in the end the Germanic despotism is shattered, as was that of Napoleon, and that of Louis XIV too.

The fact that England is in this war is a great cause for

hope, even in a time like the present when the Germans are evidently crashing their way through the Allies' defenses. England has a habit of never letting go in her wars on the Continent until the enemy is beaten: and in this war, more than any other she has fought since the Spanish Armada campaign (if even that) she cannot give up unvictorious. Her very life, and the existence of the British Empire fail, if the Germans win.

Doubtless, you have thought all this over many times — and perhaps you disagree; tho' that I can't believe until you declare it — for in your blood runs the spirit of the Puritans, who really held a solemn treaty sacred and abhorred liars and craft, and promoted individual and collective freedom. . . .

To Worthington C. Ford

MAGNOLIA, MASS^TTS: *Sept.* 3, 1914

. . . How have you been this summer? Do you still believe that the Genus Homo is — I won't say, a little lower than the angels, but worth preserving at all?

For a combination of effrontery, hypocrisy, and barbarism, I can think of no modern equal to William the Demoniac. How perfectly the seeds of Bismarck, Gobineau, Nietzsche and the rest are bearing their inevitable fruit! If the Teutonic military despotism triumphs, it will be our turn next! — say in five years, or ten at the latest. You and I will be pretty old to learn the goose-step or to man coast defences: but at least we can write as good poems as any that have appeared this month to hearten the younger generation.

I realize now, as hitherto I have realized only in imagination, what it is to be the contemporary of a vast cataclysm in which civilization itself is at stake. Not since

the Spaniards spread their blight — which was to last 80 years — over Europe, has anything similar loomed up.

I think of our children — and what may be in store for them. Still, till the worst comes, I will not believe that this desperate effort to fix German autocracy on a world crying for Democracy can succeed. Britannia (that doesn't look right, but it is) has a way of starting in slow and incompetent, but of coming out on top at the finish. In 1588 she — and the elements — destroyed the despotic attempts of Spain. At the beginning of the 18th century, at Blenheim, Ramillies, Oudenarde and Malplaquet she knocked out the Grand Monarque. A century later, she fastened her unextractable claws into the Imperial ambition of Napoleon and dragged him to destruction at Waterloo. In 1914 she —

If this be treason, make the most of it. . . .

I have been anxious for news of Mr. Rhodes, but have had none. I hear that Mr. Adams confesses to feeling old and tired of life.

My Hay-making went ahead with satisfactory speed up to August 1st — 'speed,' with me = snail's pace. The past month, fortunately, I have had to tackle the drudgery of the *Magazine;* for the War news, and a seething cauldron of unwritten ideas, have kept me from the quiet needed for writing history dispassionately. . . .

To Worthington C. Ford

MAGNOLIA, MASS., *Sept.* 11, 1914

What a man you are! Able to make ready all those volumes, and to turn aside and write me the most satisfactory letters I get.

Of course, I ought not to take your time — but it's reassuring, in this world crisis, to have your sane, clear

confirmation of my convictions. Yes — the psychology of it is the thing. It would be possible even now to trace the development of the *Deutschland ueber Alles* megalomania, from the days when Bismarck, being certain that he could put Prussia on top, consented to a United Germany, down to the present when Germans high and low are obsessed by the delusion that they are fighting for civilization. Did you see Harnack's address to the Americans in Berlin, in which he told them that Americans and Germans are bound together by the same ideals of liberty justice, &c?!! In his German insolence, which has become so much second nature even to the best of them that they are unconscious of it — he allowed that we are a *twig* of the mighty Teutonic tree.

I am constantly reminded of the state of mind of good people (and bad) during the four or five centuries when the persecution of religious heretics was regarded as a most pious act. Another obsession.

How are 65 million Germans to have this latest diabolic delusion exorcised? What you say of their inability to see any other form except Militarism is profoundly true — the most searching criticism I have come upon in these weeks. That means mania, of course — collective, national mania.

I suppose the first remedy will be a trouncing in which their terrible machine shall be smashed beyond repair. . . .

To J. Holland Rose

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *Oct.* 2, 1914

MY DEAR ROSE:

I have deferred thanking you for your letter and the copy of the 'White Papers,' because I have been expecting that I might congratulate you and all of us on a decisive victory. The old style of war is over, however, and now we

must wait two or three weeks for definite results from daily hammering and counterhammering along a hundred-mile front.

At last, there is every indication that the German right is giving way, that its mad charges in the centre and south have been repulsed, and that, in a very short time, the entire army will be retreating towards the frontier. Before this reaches you, I hope that what is today a backward movement will become a double-quick to the rear. The renewed attack on Antwerp probably indicates that the Kaiser needs to protect his troops on their tramp home.

I needn't tell you that all of us here — with the exception of those — a very small minority — who have pecuniary or racial reasons for upholding the Germans, are on the side of the Allies. Some of our chief citizens, not in public life, do not hesitate to say, in private, that, if there were danger of Germany winning, the United States ought to join the Allies. One of my intimate friends, a man of science who is as well-known in Europe as here, regrets that being 60 years old he can't enlist in the British army. Only yesterday, I lunched with an editor and author of reputation, who said that he could hardly refrain from volunteering. And these instances might be indefinitely added to. . . .

We — and I include all *real* Americans with you who are fighting, believe that the end is sure, tho' it may take a long struggle to reach it. We must beware of a premature peace. (I enclose a letter I sent the New York *Eve. Post* — use it, if it can do any good; I don't believe it is needed in Britain.)

Our anxiety is chiefly centred now on the slowness and meagreness of the English enrolments, on the long time it

must take to bring your men up to battle condition, and on the lack of British officers.

No doubt all that will be provided for. It seems to me that in Kitchener, Grey and Asquith, England has three men of the positive degree, with ability and endurance equal to the emergency — men whose equals have not been seen, united on a great enterprise, since 1805, when Pitt, Nelson, and Wellington defended England against a less formidable danger.

Best wishes to you personally, and victory to our cause.

To Frederic Crowninshield

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *Oct.* 5, 1914

DEAR CROWNINSHIELD:

How are you? Many times during the past two months I have thought of writing you; but the war has kept me in a feverish condition. It seemed, at first, as if I must do something — one man's infinitesimal share — to check the colossal abomination. But I sat tight on the lid of utterance, until I could get my bearings amid this world catastrophe. Better silence, than premature or foolish speech.

I have ofter wondered whether you were able to paint your landscapes — made forgetful, for the time, of Man's barbarities and crimes, through the draughts of Nature's nepenthe; or, as you sat at your sketching easel, did the horror and wickedness come between you and your Stockbridge hills and leave your canvas bare?

I went about hurling imaginary rejoinders to the sophistries, and arrogant claims and shameless lies of the Germans, until sometimes I thought my brain would snap or my heart stop. But gradually I have passed out of this hectic state, and now, if I haven't attained to philosophic calm, I have at least the power to look the terrific crisis

squarely in the front. I don't believe that Germany can win; but if she does, the world will try, and try, and try, until it smashes her. It took twenty years to crush Napoleon; and the present peril is far greater: because his was the despotism of a single individual; the German despotism is that of a race which has the most astonishing power for organization and for servile obedience to the dominant ring, that has ever appeared.

But those Teutonic doctrinaires have left non-Teutonic human nature out of their reckoning; and it happens that in that human nature there is an invincible instinct against men being made machines, and with it an inextinguishable desire for freedom, (call this a glorious illusion, if you will, it seems to me one of the most powerful and constant facts in history.) And sooner or later, these would destroy German domination, tho' it had Krupp guns that could throw projectiles as big as haystacks fifty miles.

At bottom, is not this a struggle between the medieval theory of Authority and Privilege and the modern ideal of Democracy?

Mark how the Devil, in his sardonic mood, connives at the destruction by the Prussians — least artistic of Europeans — of Louvain and Rheims — beauty which they could never conceive or replace.

But I'm writing you a harangue, which certainly you don't need and can't enjoy: it will merely show you how much you were spared in not having letters from me in the earlier weeks when I was really red-hot.

At the Tavern Club the other day Richard Dixey told me he thought you intend to start soon for Taormina again. Do you feel sure that Italy won't join the Allies or that some unexpected crash won't affect even the bask-

ers on Ætna's slopes? If you go, drop me a postal card giving your address, so that I can write you later.

Did you ever hobnob with John Hay? If you did, and have letters or reminiscences, let me hear from you: for I am writing his life for the American Statesmen Series. It's a pleasant task; especially in a time like this, when some such distraction from the roaring news of the day is indispensable. Addio! May good fortune go with you.

Faithfully yours

Wm. R. Thayer

To Frederic Crowninshield

Cambridge, Masstts: *Nov.* 25, 1914

I went to the meeting of the National Institute of Arts and Letters in New York last week, and hoped to find you there. But you weren't. So I send this line, to ask you to let me know your address for the winter — a postal card will do — so that I may write you when the occasion comes.

I went to see your watercolors, and was much impressed by your vigor and austerity. How you have learned to achieve uncompromising effects by a few strokes of your brush, whether to dissect a landscape or to report its colors! I saw several sketches that I should like to own — most of all that delightful view on the Appian Way.

In the Sicilian land or sea pieces I did not find that wonderful clear but soft atmosphere which makes the magic and charm of scenery there. You give a perfectly true, clear atmosphere — such as I remember so well — in late November and December, when, as I said above, every line is *uncompromising*, austere, definite.

If you go back this year — and I hope you won't, for Italy is pretty sure to be in the fighting before long —

choose occasionally one of those softer, dreamier aspects, with wealth of color, which you painted until recently and put into your Italian sonnets so lavishly.

Does this criticism mean anything? or is it heresy? or ignorance? Perhaps life is so grim this year, that I hanker more than usual for the solace of an *un*-grim art.

While working on the *Life and Letters of John Hay*, Thayer made several visits to Washington in search of material, written and oral, from those who had it to give. The following letters to Mrs. Thayer record, in summary fashion, one of these trips to the fountains of information.

To Mrs. Thayer

WASHINGTON, *Jan.* 18, 1915
6 P.M

DEAREST PIPPA:

After being away from home 3 days, 5 hours and 19 minutes without news from you, I began to feel that I had never had a family and am a perpetual orphan. Now your letter, with enclosures, has just come, and the world is less solitary.

I am too busy to write a letter.

Last night, dinner with the Henry Whites, who have a beautiful Italian palace. Mrs. W. is the handsomest woman of her age I ever saw. Fred Delano's two daughters — young, enthusiastic and unspoiled — were there; also an official, who is an expert on cannibalism, and his deaf wife. The main thing was that Mr. W. gave me a load of Hay letters that nearly staggered me, and when I started to leave, Mrs. W. asked me to dine again tonight.

Today, I examined Hay letters until 11; got rid of two callers as soon as I could; went to the State Dept., where

Billy Phillips gave me the freedom of the archives; lunched with Mrs. Wadsworth and her husband — both very cordial, and she a magnetic creature, simple and full of fun; then to Lodge's, who has just unearthed another great store of Hay documents; and then back here to rest. . . .

To Mrs. Thayer

Cosmos Club, Washington, D.C.
Jan. 19, 1915

. . . I have a great batch of Hay letters which I am examining and absorbing. I know enough national and international political secrets to blow up several ministries, or at least to smash a good many individual reputations. But as I don't put these down, I shall soon forget them, and the parties involved won't be disturbed. Today I called on Mr. Charles Adams, who took me down to lunch with his brother Henry. That arch-egoist was interesting, and very expansive, compared with last year. . . .

At the Henry Whites' last night, Jack Morgan and I were the only guests, and I heard many interesting things from him and Mr. White. Mrs. W. urged me to come again tonight to dine, but I thought it best not to wear out my welcome. . . .

To Mrs. Thayer

Cosmos Club, Washington, D.C.
Jan. 20, 1915

I'm sorry my special delivery letter routed you up at midnight. I was afraid T. R.'s letters might have been sent to Cambridge, and thereby have incurred a delay in forwarding.

Last evening I dined and spent a cozy evening with the

Hazen tots. They were well: and, judging by what they say I shouldn't wonder if they settled in Washington. She already talks of getting larger quarters.

This has been a queer day — cool and clear early; then a snowstorm which came down in flakes as big as a silver dollar and quickly covered every branch and twig; and now, at four o'clock, the sun is coming out.

I went to the Wednesday luncheon at the Round Table — Herbert Putnam's admirable institution where everybody that is anybody, and some who are not, have a meal together and much talk. . . .

Now I must go out to return bundles of letters to Lodge and Henry White. The Whites go tomorrow to New York for a week — to my regret, as both are charming and they have been most hospitable, and he most helpful. . . .

To Mrs. Thayer

Cosmos Club, Washington, D.C.
Jan. 21, 1915, *Thursday*

. . . Today I hunted through despatches at the State Dept.; then, after luncheon tried to pump Asst. Sec. of State Adee, who, being stone deaf, talks straight ahead, with wonderful precision and without paying much attention to questions he prefers to evade. His voice is like Barrett Wendell's, only more so. A spare half hour, at Mrs. Wadsworth's, revealed more Hay — great bundles of Hay — which will be sent to Cambridge.

Just now I have passed an hour with Wayne MacVeagh, who looks as old as Methuselah must have looked at 850, but has his wits and his tongue sharper than a serpent's tooth.

Now I'm going to dine with Miss Tuckerman — and so miss an informal dinner at the Lodges', which Mrs. L.

invited me to only this forenoon. The rapidity with which social parties are gathered here is admirable.

I think the personnel for our dinner next Wednesday ought to go well together.

Much love to Little Bear. I'll write her tomorrow. . . .

To Mrs. Thayer

Cosmos Club, Washington, D.C.
Jan. 21, 1915

This has been a drizzling day, in contrast with yesterday, and I have felt fagged and homesick. Travel and society combined use up my reserve bunkers.

I went to the Lodges, who have a stunning house, the great feature of which is that their drawing room is united with his library, in an unusual fashion. At dinner I talked with Mrs. Lodge, who was unfailingly agreeable. The Senator lent me a collection of Hay letters, which I have been over today — not much in them for me, but full of evidence of the sort of office-seekers' pin-pricks which annoyed the Secretary of State. Both Mr. and Mrs. Lodge talked very freely about Hay, giving me bits of atmosphere which may be useful. I expect some further statements, more definite, from Lodge before I go. . . .

I didn't get to bed till nearly one, and then, sleep was very coy.

Today I lunched with the Hazens. They have an excellent apartment, just suited to their needs — though she complains that it has no spare room. Both were most friendly. She sent her love to you.

Tonight, I dine with Henry White, who has a new château in the suburbs, so that I shall have to take a taxi. He telephoned me that he has arranged for me to see the Hay

papers at the State Dept., which, with his own, ought to help me through.

Much love to you both. I must go up stairs pretty soon, to dress. I hope that my next trip here will be with you — unhampered by hunting material and asking for interviews.

To Mrs. Thayer

COSMOS CLUB, WASHINGTON, D.C.
Saturday — Jan. 23, 1915

. . . Today I spent over an hour with Lodge, who was — and has been — most affable and generous in giving me letters. He read me a long section from his private journal about the uncertain career of the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty. Then he walked back with me to the Cosmos. The whirligig of time brings its surprises when H. C. L. and W. R. T. promenade down Connecticut Ave. as if both had been unfailing Republicans for thirty years. But a biographer, like a detective, can't let personal preferences stand between him and the information he requires.

I forgot to say that earlier I had a considerable talk — or rather monologue — with Henry Adams, who has been very communicative this year. He offered me all his Hay letters, and I came away with the bundle I wanted.

Tomorrow, lunch with the Hazens; dinner with C. F. Adams; various p.p.c. calls including one on Mrs. Shaler. I am restless to get home. This has been the most successful harvesting imaginable, but my endurance of loneliness is nearly at an end. Talks, and dinners are all well enough, but I miss you and Tabby, and have an orphan feeling most of the time.

Thank Tabby for her letter. I went out to get her a surprise, but all the shops were closed, and I'm afraid that I

shall leave so early Monday morning that they won't be open.

To H. Nelson Gay

CAMBRIDGE, *Jan.* 28, 1915

Your letter of Dec. 29 reached me a few days ago in Washington, where I was busy Hay-making, and the result would give even you — mighty harvester of documents — a palpitation of joy. I bring home nearly a half-cord of letters and other papers, apparently all that I shall need to complete the biography. In addition, much talk from men who were on the inside, *pro* and *con*, of the diplomatic measures in which Hay was engaged.

Like other capitals, Washington is a place where much invaluable business is transacted unofficially at table, and I dined out the nine evenings I was there. I listened anxiously for opinions on the war, and especially on the attitude of the Administration, and I was sobered to perceive not exactly pro-German leanings, but a sort of fatalistic acceptance of the prediction that this country is going to have a reaction in favor of Germany.

This I do not believe: but it is perfectly evident that the German propagandists are working like devils, and as they have no respect for truth, nor any sense of shame, they make a great rub-a-dub-dub. There have been presidents in the White House who would have shipped his Dummheit, Bernstorff, long ago. What all his efforts and those of the Corruption Board in New York show is that the German-Americans have been solidified into a pretty compact body, which frightens our politicians, who now have both the German and the Irish votes to be toaded to. . . .

To Arthur Lyon Cross

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
Jan. 29, 1915

How long your kind note has gone unacknowledged! I shall have to plead a ten days' trip to Washington as a fractional extenuation; much writing, and much indolence will explain the rest.

The brief review of your admirable History of England, was written at this desk, by one who cannot claim any special qualification in your field; but he knows — or thinks he knows — a good thing when he sees it in any large field of history; hence the review.

I turn to your book now when I seek instant information, or corroboration, and I congratulate you on the way in which you give it. To have carried so long a work through, in such excellent proportion, is a rare achievement . . .

To Lady Agatha Russell

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
Feb. 19, 1915

DEAR LADY AGATHA,

I write at once in reply to your most interesting letter of February 3rd to thank you for it, and the hymn and sermons, and to reassure you, so far as I can, in regard to our American attitude towards the war.

The true American spirit is shown in the leaders in the *New York Times* — which has been for the past year our greatest newspaper — and in the *Sun*, *Evening Post*, *Springfield Republican*, and many others. . .

I don't understand why your great London dailies fail to quote from these papers, which often have an entire leader from one of your London papers.

What a part of the English public seems to take amiss is the fact that this country does not officially express its sympathy with the Allies; but if you reflect a moment you will see that for us to do this would be equivalent to declaring war on Germany; and many of us think that it will serve the Allies best — certainly it will best enable us to keep the peace here among the seditious, *until the time comes to act* — if we remain neutral.

Thanks to this neutrality, England and France have been getting food and munitions from over here, and now at last the Kaiser, driven stark mad as it appears, has declared his war zone and threatened to blow up our ships and yours with his submarines.

If one American life is lost in this way we shall declare war on Germany. This is I think a safe prediction, even amid the daily shifts of diplomacy and occurrences. . . .

To Henry Holt

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *April* 18, 1915

Among the matters which I am looking up, in connexion with my life of John Hay, is the authorship of 'Democracy,' which you published in 1880.

Hay himself, in a letter to Henry Adams, implies that he (Hay) wrote it; and while I was in Washington last January, I got the same opinion from persons on the inside.

If you know, would it not be proper for you to tell? Hay has been dead ten years; Mrs. Hay is dead; Clarence King — to whom the Library of Congress attributes the book — died in 1904. There seems no reason to withhold the information any longer.

Hay's authorship of 'The Bread-Winners' — as you

know — has been acknowledged, and if it hadn't been, I have a portfolio full of papers to confirm it.

Congratulations on the continued energy and pertinence of the *Unpopular Review*.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *May* 11, 1915

There is too much to say about the destruction of the *Lusitania*, and so I will say nothing. But I send you some cartoons which will show you that American public opinion is mightily aroused. Except when Sumter was fired on — if even then — there has been no such deep, solemn, leashed-in, indignation.

The only question here is, what to do? We can't hurt Germany's Army and Navy — even if we had Army and Navy of our own capable of doing much hurt to any large power. We more than half suspect that Germany wants us to declare war, because she hopes that we can't then ship food and arms to the Allies.

Don't let the English think for a moment that our hesitation proceeds from timidity. I saw a good many representative men at the Harvard Overseers' Meeting yesterday, and the single regret of all of them was that no way can yet be seen for throwing all our weight against the Common Outlaw of Civilization. Before this reaches you — if it ever does — Wilson will probably have given his decision. I can't believe that it will show the faintest sign of wavering. . . .

This monstrous crime has had the beneficial effect already of causing many German-Americans to declare that they are loyal. I predict that before the end hyphens will be very unfashionable over here, for a long time. . . .

To Henry Adams

MAGNOLIA, MASS., *July* 17, 1915

DEAR MR. ADAMS:

I was glad to hear from Sturgis Bigelow, at the last Saturday Club luncheon, that you have been in good condition at Dublin.

I am nearing the end of my Hay Biography, which brings you daily before me, and I only regret that I am not near enough to consult you — if you would suffer it — on many little points that come up.

For instance: Hay seems to have remained a Blaine enthusiast to the end. Didn't he see what the Mulligan Letters meant — or did he take the view, common to so many Republicans, that it was petty to complain about spots on the sun, when the sun itself shone just as dazzlingly in spite of them?

When I was in Washington your brother Charles told me that you had an intimate coterie, consisting of yourself and Mrs. Adams, of Mr. and Mrs. Hay, and of Clarence King — and that this was called the Five of Hearts. From it, he said, issued 'Democracy,' Hay being the writer and you others the critics. Was he right in the name — Five of Hearts?

I am sure he was wrong in the authorship; because, after spending two years on Hay's various works and reading several thousand pages of his letters and official correspondence, I know that Hay could not have written 'Democracy.' Neither could King. You alone were up to the level of its substance, vocabulary and style.

This leads me to venture to say, Mr. Adams, that, having read, and re-read your 'Education,' I cannot think of your determination not to publish it as being anything less than a great loss to American Literature. And not to

that only, but to autobiography and to that small, rare group of books in which an epoch is personified in an individual. Let me urge you to reconsider, and to print the book during your lifetime.

Sooner or later it is sure to be published, because some of the copies dispersed among your friends now, will inevitably come to public sale and to libraries — as is the fate of all privately printed books.

It has helped me greatly in my work on Hay, giving me, as nothing else has given, the conditions and the atmosphere, as well as the *dramatis personæ*, of his Washington life.

I have availed myself of your permission to quote from it, taking a few passages that refer to King and to Hay.

Will you lend me your 'Tahiti' — which I have never seen — but which I wish to read in order to fill out the episode which you merely mention in the 'Education'?

One other question in regard to Hay. I find persons who surmise that he became 'worldly' in the last dozen or fifteen years — a 'society' man, rather keen in choosing the companionship of the very rich. I do not detect this trait — which I suppose is summed up in the monosyllable 'snob.' What shall I say about it?

In the summer of 1915 Thayer suffered a grave misfortune which was to have the most serious consequences for him during the rest of his life. He lost the use of his right eye. Two brief entries in his diary refer to this calamity:

'*July* 25. Magnolia. Sunday morning, on going downstairs, everything looked black. I found that my right eye was mostly blind. Monday Dr. Williams said this was due to retinal hemorrhages.'

'*Aug.* 18. Dr. Williams says there is little likelihood that I shall ever recover use of my right eye. The left is still intact. So there is something less than half a chance that I shall not become totally blind.'

There was then, for a few days a faint hope that the disaster might not be as complete as was feared, that the right eye might still have some service in it. But this hope was soon dispelled and ever after there was the recurrent apprehension that the other might become affected and that darkness might ultimately close in.

Three months later Thayer made the following entries in his journal:

'*Nov.* 8. I have days of strange depression evidently due to some physical cause: for I don't fret, or kick against the pricks, but accept this time of eclipse reasonably, only hoping it may not be worse.'

'*Nov.* 12. Dr. Williams finds the peripheral hemorrhages much decreased, as are the other signs of congestion. The clot in the retina doesn't budge. I am allowed to write or read three times a day, for half an hour at a time. This is like coming to the surface for a breathing spell, after being half-drowned.'

There was no complaint from Thayer. He faced the situation quietly, firmly, stoically. But the conditions of his life were permanently altered for the worse, his work henceforth was impeded and curtailed. But it did not cease. Adjusting himself, as best he could, to the new and unfavorable circumstances, he carried on.

To Charles Downer Hazen

MAGNOLIA, MASS., *August* 19, 1915

By what paradox was it that your last delightful letter brought us such undelightful and undesired news? We had

kept on hoping that you were both on your way to Magnolia. Does your great work 'Imprecations which a Gentleman may Use' cover this case? That work will certainly be a best seller. Its first edition ought to exceed a hundred thousand copies; not that there are that number of gentlemen in the world, but there are several million who think themselves to be, or would like to be or try to fake the part.

Really, I grieve, that you are kept in Vermont by those artisans; and all the more because nearly a month ago, a blood-clot suddenly developed in my right eye, and I have been forbidden to read or write ever since. Polyphemus would give a great deal to see and hear you and Mrs. Hazen.

The oculist can promise no term to my disability — it may last weeks or months. The one thing certain, he says, is that I must not do any hard head work till the retina clears. So I think you must drop me from your programme of the American Historical Association. I am truly sorry to put you to any annoyance. Search your 'Imprecations' for the proper words to address to me and then for others that I may address to my plight.

We expect to be here until towards the end of September. Can't we see you both, somehow, somewhere, before you go to Washington?

We three send you two very cordial greetings.

Yours faithfully

Wm. R. Thayer

P.S. I have had to dictate my revision of the last chapters of 'John Hay' but unless my end comes before next Tuesday, the book's end will occur on that day. So that task interrupted, and baffled, will be on the booksellers' counters in October *quand même*.

To Charles Downer Hazen

MAGNOLIA, MASS., *August* 26, 1915

How very kind you both are! I wish that we could accept your invitation to enjoy the altitude of Vermont but we cannot. First, because I am not allowed to travel; Secondly, because I have to stay here till the last proof is read; Thirdly, because I am in no condition to be any one's guest. These last days, my mutinous eye has added another item to my pot-pourri of ailments — to wit, vertigo. It wouldn't be seemly for me, in an access of swirling, to clutch you as the young heroes in the novels of the late Bulwer-Lytton used to clutch lamp-posts for other reasons.

But I hope that before you go back to Washington we may have at least a glimpse of you both in Cambridge. By that time I expect to walk and see straight and, in any case, my heart still knows its friends.

To Poultney Bigelow

MAGNOLIA, MASS., *August* 27, 1915

MY DEAR BIGELOW,

Don't imagine that your repeated invitations are not duly appreciated here. The truth is that some five weeks ago, one of my eyes started to go blind and that has held up all reading and writing for me. Thanks to an efficient secretary and dictation I am finishing the John Hay book, but I have had to concentrate on that.

Now the oculist says I must keep quiet for two or three months, a prohibition which cuts me off from Malden-on-Hudson and many other pleasures. The oculist says also, 'you mustn't get excited.' Do you think it would be possible for us to talk half an hour on The Topic

without sending an excited rush of blood to my head? I don't.

I suppose your arteries and blood vessels must be as supple as a baby's or you too long ago would have had blood clots in half a dozen places. When Mrs. Thayer reads me the N.Y. *Times* every day, I say, 'If there's anything from Bigelow there let us have it.' Keep up the fire! And especially riddle the mongrel hyphenates who boast that they can control this country.

Ever *Yankeely* yours

WM. R. THAYER

To Henry Cabot Lodge

MAGNOLIA, MASS., *Sept.* 15, 1915

DEAR SENATOR LODGE:

. . . I wish there was some way by which the inarticulate *real* Americans, of whom I am one, could make the Administration feel that it must stop its policy of palaver with Bernstorff and the German Foreign Office. A week or two more of such proceedings as we have had since the *Arabic* was torpedoed will complete our diplomatic humiliation in the face of the world.

Please don't set your expectations too high in the case of the 'John Hay.' It won't be another 'Cavour,' but I have been greatly interested in preparing it, and you as a practised biographer understand how fascinating the problem is of making each subject not merely probable but lifelike. Hay had so many facts that he ought to interest readers of very different tastes. I hope too that the public will see that he was a very rare type of American, and that he remained American to the end in spite of his cosmopolitan predilections.

To Robert Grant

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
September 21st, 1915

Many thanks for your kind letter. My eye trouble — a hemorrhage on the retina — seems to be so common that I wonder anybody escapes it, especially after passing the fifth decade. It is especially common among those who draw tight corks — another reason for sticking to champagne.

The oculist says, 'Patience and again patience,' but I hope before long to be able to use my good eye for reading and writing. We have just come home and I look forward to seeing friends at the Tavern and elsewhere. The summer always makes a long gap in companionships.

I already hear, and hear gladly, very good things about your new novel. An eminent Congregationalist and lawyer told me to-day that it is the best since 'Unleavened Bread,' and that he has ordered it for his book club. We authors, of course, would abolish book clubs and require each individual to buy a separate copy; but as he regarded the admission of a book into his club as the final test of merit — if not of fame — I congratulate you.

'John Hay' will be out in a month, and his author will then strip and prepare like St. Sebastian to receive the arrows of critics.

To Rupert Sargent Holland

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *October* 16, 1915

I can only say 'thank you' with the fullest implication which that phrase carries to your letter. Of course it was the coöperation and the approval of several thousand graduates like you that kept me at work on the *Magazine*.[1]

[1] In September, 1915, Thayer resigned his position as Editor of *The Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, after a service of twenty-three years.

From the start, I had no doubt as to the value for Harvard, for the graduates and for American education of such a journal; the only doubt was whether enough men would pay to support it. The fact that its twenty-fourth volume is now running proves that it has not died of penury, although I need not add that there never has been a time when the *Magazine*, like all other living branches of Harvard, could not have spent most profitably a much larger income than it ever received.

My effort throughout was to keep my personal preferences or prejudices in the background — except when, like any other graduate, I contribute an article — but I am genuinely surprised to have so many persons refer to it as *My* Magazine: for that seems to imply that I failed to depersonalize it.

Castle will show that the *Magazine* has not depended for its existence on any one editor, but on the fact that Harvard men of all opinions have had a free representation in it, and that it strives to chronicle in the best fashion it can the annals of Pan-Harvard.

I am sure that you are busy at some literary work besides your profession, and I wish you good luck in it. . . .

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *October* 20, 1915

. . . I am sending you a copy of 'John Hay.'[1] Don't feel obliged to read a page of it, or to acknowledge it: but there are many sparkling things in it to brighten a dark half hour, and there are revelations in regard to the German diplomacy of Hay's time which bear on the atrocious War of today.

[1] *The Life and Letters of John Hay* were published in two volumes on October 16, 1915. Down to January, 1926, nearly 29,000 sets had been sold.

The book came out only four days ago, having had advance orders warranting an edition of 4000 copies (including 500 copies cabled for from England); and already The Riverside Press is at work printing 3000 more copies. This, they say, beats all previous records here for a two-volume biography. I report this not boastfully, for I have never expected any book of mine to start with a rush; and now I am wondering where I shall hide if those seven thousand purchasers are disappointed and all make a descent at once to vent their wrath on the author. Should you hear any of the enraged over there express their disgust just pretend that you don't know him.

The great topic here is the Coming Out of the Daughter, who is still filial enough to hold the pen for her Polyphemus father.

To Harry L. Koopman

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *October* 28, 1915

A word to correct your misapprehension about my dictation.

I dictated only parts of the last five or six chapters of the Hay book, which had already been written, and some of them had been printed in *Harper's*, and so required simply recasting and amplification.

I have always shunned the dictation habit as I would morphine or cocaine, because it is evidently easy to acquire, and when acquired, it tends to take off the fine edge of thought, and to blur the perfect bloom of phrase. Think of risking a gradual decadence in power of expression until you sank to the caterpillar crawl of Henry James's diction!

I know few if any books of real literature — books whose style outlives the fashion of more than one generation, which were produced by dictation. Do you suppose

Thiers would have *written* his history in nineteen volumes? He *talked* it to that length because talk is easy. If you have found 'swing' in my writings it came there because when I have my pen to work with I never let a sentence or paragraph stand until it satisfies my ear. I read *aloud* over and over again what I have written in order to make sure that the words shall be not only the best I can find to fit my meaning, but also the best to slip easily from the tongue of the reader. Reading aloud is after all the final test of writing.

My eye trouble came, the superstitious would think, as a direct judgment.

Only a few days before, in recording that Hay had to resort to dictating 'Lincoln,' I remarked that dictation was the enemy of style. And then I was driven to it myself, Q.E.D.

And if I had not a Secretary to take down this rambling talk, I should not have written it.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *Nov.* 3, 1915

Please insert this slip in your copy of 'John Hay.' An author who can't revise his proofs ought not to publish; and I tremble to think if you have already dipped into the book, you may have had stamped into your memory some of these awful errors. You are young, and your memory is 'Wax to receive and marble to retain,' as that great and good man, Byron, the poet of youth, remarked of one of the many Margarets of his day.

If you have any direct communications now with Mother Nature, can't you tell her in your persuasive way that there are many reforms she ought to make? Indeed, if she were an observant person she would have discovered

long ago that she lavishes her bounties at the wrong end of life.

She gives to youth beauty, strength, health, high spirits, freedom from forebodings, hope and that unquestioning acceptance of the joy today brings; but it is we, or rather I — for you can still train with the juveniles — who need eyes and nerves and all those other attributes of Youth, which Youth doesn't even know the value of. Mother Nature even begrudges me so commonplace but necessary an article as hair.

Can't you seductively hint to her that she ought to do better than this, after trying her system on man for a million years more or less?

The Greeks did better when they gave Argus a hundred eyes, so that he should go on with his beneficent work, even though a dozen retinas were put out of commission.

All goes well here, our absorbing concern being the Tea at the Boathouse on the 22nd, when your namesake[1] will be presented to the astonished 'Society' of this neighborhood by her doting and subservient parents. . . .

To Henry Osborn Taylor

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *Nov.* 8, 1915

DEAR TAYLOR:[2]

I will have sent to you whatever arcana of the Mass. Historical Society's rites, ceremonies and pageants it may be safe to entrust to our uncertain post-office employees. The secret ritual you must learn in your coal closet by the light of a rush taper. The grip will be given you by the President most privately, when you come in.

[1] Mr. Thayer's daughter, Margaret, was named after Mrs. Foster.

[2] Mr. Taylor had recently been elected a corresponding member of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

The item which stands out

"Fair as a star when only one
Is shining in the sky"

states that no member, resident or non-resident shall pay dues. The annual volume of 'Proceedings' gives the names of the living members. As the corresponding members number only fifty and are chosen from all parts of the world outside of Massachusetts the list is distinguished; for even with our best wishes to glorify the Grand Old Commonwealth and to think of ourselves at least as highly as the Prayer Book permits, we cannot claim that in these lean years our 'stern and rock-bound coast' produces one hundred active members all of whom are up to the Motley or Parkman standard. . . .

To Charles G. Washburn

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *November* 10, 1915

DEAR CHARLIE WASHBURN:

My secretary has read to me your study of Theodore, omitting some of his documents and speeches. I hope that you will publish it, for it is in many respects the most illuminating report on our extraordinary friend that I have seen.[1]

I like especially your demonstration of the continuity in T. R.'s character and motives: it is certainly more plausible and more likely to be true than the explanation of those who make insatiate ambition the mainspring of his career.

Your own temper seems to me excellent. You make no secret of your personal affection for Theodore, but, at the

[1] *Theodore Roosevelt: The Logic of his Career*, by Charles G. Washburn. Published, 1916, Houghton Mifflin Company.

same time, you keep your independence of judgment and criticize him frankly wherever you deem it proper. . . .

I am obliged to you for letting me see the study.

To Poultney Bigelow

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *Nov.* 25, 1915

DEAR BIGELOW:

Your 'Memories' came yesterday, and Mrs. Thayer has read nearly half of the book aloud to me.[1] We have often roared over it, and almost continuously have enjoyed the soundless chuckle which your constant raillery provokes. What a supple skill you have in outlining a person, or in describing a scene, or in commenting on events!

Hurrah for Hinzpeter! and I add, Hurrah for Bismarck in your sketch, with none of his brutality glossed over! (I mean, hurrah for the truthfulness of your sketch, not for O. v. B.)

You know Prussia, from soldiers to sausages.

More anon. I'm allowed — as an experiment — to write a few notes each day, but they must be brief. . . .

To Henry Osborn Taylor

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *Nov.* 29, 1915

Your comments on John Hay are gratefully received. I wrote the book, not to write a eulogy or a dislogy, but to present the facts of an unusually interesting career so clearly that each reader could form his own opinion of the man. As I read biographies, there has been none so frank as this issued in a long time. Remember Hay wrote in his letters to his intimates just what he thought of public men, usually putting his thought in a form of gay exaggeration. So we find on the printed page expressions about his con-

[1] Poultney Bigelow, *Prussian Memories*, 1915.

temporaries such as you or I, for instance, probably don't write about Wilson or Bryan or McAdoo, but we utter freely, and even with unguarded loudness in our conversation. I say this without intending to make an apology.

As to the Institute[1] — I supposed that you were long ago a member. Membership in it can do you no harm, and if it causes you to smile occasionally so much the better, for smiles are rare enough in these dour times. After all, if we work for the love of it or from a feeling that it is our duty to speak out — without having honors or popularity or even the public's attention in view — we need not despise whatever appreciation or goodwill is implied by the approbation of Institutes and such. . . .

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *Dec.* 8, 1915

DEAR MARGIE:

Your letter, describing your probable residence, has just come, and as I have vertigo this morning, due to heating of what remains of my brain over an article on German diabolism, I will hold on to my chair and reply to you at once. The glorious vegetation of England certainly has its drawbacks, when both Flora (and Fauna) insist on coming into the houses instead of staying outdoors. In the good old days when Harry Apthorp and I traveled through the land we found Fauna more troublesome than Flora. That reminds me that at Cambridge we took lodgings with Miss Jemima Jiggins, 5 Jesus Lane, who besides the glory of her unique alliteration, had thoroughly clean rooms. I suppose she gave us other food, but I remember only marmalade and gooseberry jam in modest quantities. Everything about the place was modest — even Harry

[1] The National Institute of Arts and Letters.

and I — and if you and Michael and the children can contrive to turn yourselves into dwarfs, you might manage to squeeze in. In our time no grass grew on the floor nor moss on the walls. Miss Jiggins of Jesus was then of uncertain age, which now must be certain, and if you tell her that two impecunious youths from the States enjoyed her hospitality eight-and-twenty years ago and now recommend you to her, she will doubtless welcome you with aged but affectionate arms and deduct a farthing a week from your bill. I fear, however, with your large views, you will choose the lordly mansion you speak of with its aquarium in the cellar, the brook trying to get into the kitchen, and the mold and mushrooms elsewhere. Over here we have combination piano-beds and even bath-tub-beds, but your combination fishing-pool-cellar shows that John Bull is more inventive than Uncle Sam. Shan't we send you out hip-length rubber boots and life-preservers, and why don't you borrow a good custom of our Italian peasant ladies and carry a scaldino, which can be applied at a moment's notice over the coldest spot you detect? To get the best results from the scaldino you must wear one of those thick, blue-cotton aprons and munch dried squash seeds when you are hungry.

Margaret's party surpassed our expectations. Billy Endicott insisted on decorating the Boat Club, so that it looked like a vast bower and grove in which the young people danced.

'What an unusual house you live in,' said one of the visitors, who hailed from the remote recesses of Beacon Street. As many of your correspondents must already have sent you full descriptions of this unparalled society event, I won't say more about it. . . .

The copies of *The Times* with the review of 'Hay' have

just come. Many thanks! If any other notices reach you, please send them on. The book seems to have broken all records here; over 10,000 copies already issued and a likelihood of 15,000 by Christmas. And yet I would gladly forego a good many editions to recover the use of my right eye.

To Henry Adams

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *December* 22, 1915

DEAR MR. ADAMS:

I thank you cordially for your letter. You are the one person whose verdict really concerned me, for you not only knew Hay best, but you also know literature and the difficult art of biography. Besides yourself, only Senator Lodge and one literary critic (writing to me privately) have referred to the matter of *biography* at all: altho' the problem involved in writing Hay's life was one of the toughest possible.

I am especially relieved to hear that you approve — in part, at least — of my description of the Washington which formed Hay's *milieu*, and your own *salon*, without which, it is evident to me, he could never have 'found himself' during his last twenty years. I wrote with anxiety, and with perfect frankness. In fact, when the proofs were read to me, I concluded that no biography of a man so recently dead as Hay has been more frank. I had always in mind, not the persons who might read the book in 1915, but those who ten or twenty years hence — if Hay's memory endures till then — would desire as true a likeness of a versatile and rarely *vitalized* man as I could make.

The external success of the book has been astonishing — some 15,000 copies sold in the first nine weeks — a proof that Hay's happy fortune follows him after death. The

newspapers have been almost unanimously friendly, in that unintelligent, bovine way which may make a book popular but can't give the author any help. The great English dailies have paid it unusual attention, and now the weeklies are following suit. No doubt, some critic somewhere is sharpening his pen for a real review.

Let me tell you frankly that I hesitated long before deciding not to send you an advance copy of the book. My impulse was to send one — for I feel greatly indebted to you for your kindness in letting me see your bundle of Hay's letters — but I feared that you might regard it as an impertinence, and that I should expect you to read the book and to deliver an opinion on it. So I concluded — reluctantly — to forego the pleasure of sending a presentative copy.

Owing to the ban on my eyesight, I could not read the proofs, with the result that some annoying misprints and a few misstatements crept into the first edition: but these have been corrected, and when I recover enough eyesight to go through the book critically, I hope to catch any others that have not been pointed out. If all goes well, I shall have one eye to depend on for the rest of my life.

May I repeat the hope, which I expressed in a letter last spring, that you will arrange to have *your* letters to Hay and his to you in shape for publication? And may I plead again for the publication of 'The Education'?

I was glad to hear from Senator Lodge when he was last here that you seemed unusually brisk this autumn.

Thanking you again for letting me know your opinion of the biography,

I am very truly yours

Wm. R. Thayer

To Henry Adams

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *December* 27, 1915

DEAR MR. ADAMS:

In writing to you the other day, I forgot to ask you whether you will not send me a photograph of yourself to be used in case the publishers issue a new edition of the 'Life of Hay.'

I should have asked you for it for the original edition, but I feared that you might not care to send it until you knew what sort of a book the biography would turn out to be. The omission troubled me, and many readers must have noticed it, and I shall be greatly obliged to you if you will enable me to fill it.

CHAPTER VIII

THE WAR

1916–1917

THE war had come when Thayer was in the midst of his work upon *The Life and Letters of John Hay*. It acted inevitably as a highly disturbing factor in the tranquil, uneventful life of the scholar. Nevertheless he kept on, as best he could, until the 'Hay' was finished, grateful in a certain measure for the relief and distraction that steady employment upon a definite task afforded. But now that the 'Hay' was done he sought no new subject for investigation. The deepening intensity of the conflict absorbed his attention to the exclusion of everything else. The imperative duty of every man to do whatever he could to sustain the struggle and to assure it a favorable issue dominated his thought. Wherever he saw a chance to be of use he plunged in, whether it was wise or not. He played his part in the great tragedy of his time. Thinking constantly of the cause, following every step in the conflict with what attention he could, its ups and downs, its disasters and its successes, the war was his constant preoccupation. Whatever he wrote during the next three years, and whatever he did, had its reference to the war, was determined by it.

Thayer's observations and comments on the war and the character of his personal participation in it are revealed in the letters included in this chapter.

To Henry Adams

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *January* 14, 1916

DEAR MR. ADAMS:

Please excuse my delay in replying to your last letter. I find that having only one working eye, quarters my allowance for reading and writing.

I heartily agree with you as to the desirability — in general — of printing names instead of initials. But there were cases in the 'John Hay' where I could not follow this rule. It would have been disastrous, for instance, to have named Spring-Rice. So, too, I thought that it would be more *polite* to omit Curzon's name in that neat reference to him as having deserved well of Britain by marrying an American millionairess.

Some of the names I didn't know myself, because I could not recover the originals of all the letters which Mrs. Hay printed in the private edition.

Your mention of Tahiti leads me to ask whether you have a copy of your book about it which you will let me see. When I wrote you in June about it, you said that you would look for it on returning to Washington.

As I think you do not read the newspapers, you are spared the ignominy of recent news. Your neighbor across Lafayette Square has had only one counterpart, Buchanan. I am astonished by the number of sober-minded men here — till now his opponents and even deriders — who hope Roosevelt will be the next president.

To Henry Adams

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *January* 19, 1916

DEAR MR. ADAMS:

'Tahiti' has come. I am greatly obliged to you for sending it, and I look forward to much pleasure in reading it.

You are one of the few writers who abound in surprises, and in this case you surprise me at the start by the very subject.

I trust that the winter is favorable to you. Here, we have been having winds with the cutting quality of cold chisels which the ignorant suppose went out with the Puritans. The Yankees are a vanishing race, but the Yankee climate does not change. . . .

To M. A. DeWolfe Howe

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *January* 20, 1916

DEAR MARK:

It is very good of you to write. Friends are exempt from either reading a friend's book or from criticising it. Otherwise, friendship might come to be strained, and so cease. For a man's book is no better ground for friendship than is the color of his eyes.

But — when a friend does spontaneously read my book and writes a letter like this of yours, I am heartily gratified.

As a piece of biography the Hay was a tough problem, so that I am delighted to find that I got by the difficulty in one way or another — otherwise, so many different kinds of persons would not have found it easy reading. . . .

To Charles Downer Hazen

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *Jan.* 26, 1916

Your letter gave great entertainment here, and I won't delay longer to acknowledge it, although this is a week of successive waterspouts for me. Tonight, I speak at Wellesley; Saturday night I try, as toastmaster, to stimulate the wit of old Lampooners at the 40th birthday of the *Lampoon;* and Sunday afternoon, I am down for a speech in Tremont

Temple to protest against the proposed embargo and to remind the audience that America is for the Americans. No hyphenaters, mongrels or double-shufflers will find me complimentary. . . .

I hear that somebody in Washington has intimated that I 'couldn't' write frankly about Hay. If you happen to meet with this criticism, won't you please say that you know that the Hay family gave me absolutely a free hand, that they did not see a page of the book before it was in print, and that they have suggested no revision of opinions since it came out? In fact, I hid nothing and I believe that no recent biography is more wide-openly frank — too frank, other critics say.

I don't mind what they whisper about me, but I should be sorry to have any such calumny circulated about Mrs. Wadsworth and Mrs. Whitney.

Now I must hurry to Boston to preside at a meeting of the War Relief Fund.

To Henry Adams

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *February* 4, 1916

DEAR MR. ADAMS:

Happening to be in the office of the Houghton Mifflin Company a day or two ago, I was greatly pleased to hear that they hoped to persuade you to consent to the publication of the 'Education' in a companion volume to 'Mont St. Michel and Chartres.'

I take the liberty of repeating here — what I have said more than once — that I trust you will let them issue the book — as speedily as possible. It ought to be made public, not only as a sequel to the 'Mont St. Michel,' but as a unique production, which will travel far — and for a very long time — on its own merits.

I had an enthusiastic letter from Mrs. Cameron in Paris, who only regretted that my biography of Hay was not longer, giving still more of his correspondence. Of course, you know better than I do that there is material enough for four volumes instead of two; but I remember old Saadi's warning — 'Stop, before men shall say, "Enough."'

If you would select it, what an attractive book would be made with the title, 'Henry Adams and His Friends.'

To Mrs. J. D. Cameron

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *February* 5, 1916

DEAR MRS. CAMERON:

Let me thank you heartily for your kind letter about my 'Life of John Hay.' You can imagine with what trepidation I moved about, as a sort of chartered eaves-dropper, among that group of persons, so many of whom are still alive. My first purpose was to tell the truth so far as matters concerned Mr. Hay, but not to injure the living. The biography seems to me the *frankest* we have had on this side of the Atlantic.

Fortunately, I found nothing in Mr. Hay's record to suppress, although, of course, there were certain State secrets, which belonged to the Government, rather than to his biographer, which I could not reveal. But even these were few, and whoever reads with a knowledge of events will not need footnotes to assure him that I had good warrant for statements which I make on my own authority.

As to Henry Adams: I undertook the work without any preconceived notions; but many persons told me, as you intimate, that Mr. Adams really guided Hay's policy as Secretary of State. There is nothing to indicate this in the

record. The great pilot after 1901 was Roosevelt, who put through several of the chief measures which were commonly attributed to Hay. The policy of the Open Door, and the preservation of China, were Hay's diplomatic triumphs.

In politics — as you know far better than I — Hay never agreed with Adams, and the wonder is that men of such opposite views should have been such staunch friends. Mr. Adams himself assures me that Hay rarely consulted him, or any other friend, on State Department matters. Doubtless, there was the indirect, almost subconscious influence of the stronger, more systematic mind on the more casual and less aggressive, and I hope that this can be detected in the letters I quoted.

Your offer of your own collection of letters is most generous. If at any time it became possible to make a volume, I would gladly edit them. But this could hardly be done — indeed, it couldn't be done — while Mr. Adams is alive, and who knows who will be his literary executor? His brother Brooks? My acquaintance with Mr. Henry Adams has been very slight, altho' I have seen much of Mr. Charles Adams for more than twenty years, and, while he kindly lent me his material, and answered some of my questions, while I was writing the book, his general attitude was of that holding-at-arm's-length variety which you have probably seen. But since the book came out, and has had an unprecedented success, he has written me a twelve-page letter of commendation, and I hear from Mr. Harry White and others that he is really enthusiastic. So I have ventured to suggest to him that he prepare a work — 'Henry Adams and His Friends' — giving from their correspondence and his a picture of that remarkable group. If you still write him — and think well of the sug-

gestion — will you not — independently — hint at something of this kind?

I am now urging him to consent to the publication of his 'Education' — as a companion volume to his 'Mont St. Michel and Chartres.'

When you are again in America, I shall be deeply grateful if you will allow me to read your collection of letters — even if there be no prospect of printing them. I regretted that, in the 'Hay,' I couldn't use the few notes he had from Spring-Rice, or even mention him by name, because it seemed to me indiscreet to do so during this crisis.

Your remark on 'Cavour' gives me great satisfaction; that book involved a quarter of a century of enthusiasm, plodding and labor, and I rejoice that the figure of the great Camillo seems life-like to you. Hay was technically a much more difficult subject — for his life had neither continuity nor ruling purpose, and it is infinitely hard to prove to the reader through two volumes that the hero had 'charm,' 'wit,' &c. &c. But of course the labor of preparation was slight compared with the 'Cavour.'

Please pardon this long letter. You were one of the three or four persons whose opinion I was literally *anxious* to have — I wish I might also have had that of Mrs. Lodge, who gave me valuable hints — and your kindness must be my excuse for overwhelming you with this reply.

Very sincerely yours

Wm. R. Thayer

I still recall vividly one evening more than thirty years ago, when I was at the Wayne MacVeaghs' in Philadelphia — Charles was a classmate and crony of mine at Harvard — that you came in.

To Lawrence S. Mayo

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *February* 25, 1916

I am truly grateful to you for the copy of your biography of Lord Amherst, with the kind inscription. I wish that I had more than half my eyesight, so that I might read the book at once, as I should like to do; but I shall have to take it piecemeal. Looking over the volume cursorily — which is all that I have been able to do — it seems to me very attractive.

I am glad that you are devoting yourself to the neglected art of Biography, which I hope you will do your share towards lifting to the level where it belongs. It cannot, of course, displace or serve as a substitute for History, any more than portrait painting can banish other painting: but it has a great field of its own, and it has its own difficulties to be mastered and its high satisfactions.

To cultivate the feeling that the Past is alive, to see vividly, to discern essentials, and to interpret lucidly — that should be the equipment of both historian and biographer. Devotion to Truth is, of course, presupposed. And, having equipment and material, one must also have the art of expression — for, let a doctrinaire deny it till Doom's Day, when he comes to put words together he is practising an Art, and he cannot claim exemption from its laws on the plea that he is scientific. So, to enrich the mind with literature, especially with great poetry, should be an indispensable part of the historian's training.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *March* 6, 1916

. . . A month ago we had a great meeting in Tremont Temple one Sunday afternoon.[1] Royce made a speech

[1] January 30, 1916. Mr. Royce spoke on 'The Duties of Americans in the

which was like a message from Mt. Sinai — the topmost word of its kind since the War began. The audience rose in a mingled enthusiasm and awe, and would have voted — I believe — to intrench on Bunker Hill and await the invasion of the Boches, if such a resolution had been offered. Bob Bacon urged that this country give active help to the Allies, and I described the German conspiracy here since 1898. It was a strangely exhilarating sensation, to stand up there in the presence of 3000 persons, not knowing whether they would mob you or not, and not caring, but just having the mighty satisfaction of letting out the pent up righteous — I hope it *was* righteous — indignation of 18 months. It was probably not politic or philosophical; but, as Greenslet says, my middle name is not 'Discretion,' and if I am ever to be 'Philosophical' — where that means indifference to right and wrong — it must be in some other world.

We are continuing our meetings, with other speakers, but none has been so successful as the first.

I can't describe to you how we have been angered this past week by the attempts of Congress to 'down' Wilson and vote slyly as the German-speaking propagandists wish. At this very moment the House is probably going on record, and until I know the result tonight, I shan't rest easy; because the mongrel Congressmen are capable of any baseness. This situation has been largely due — I think — to Wilson's long tolerance of German bullying. Perhaps ten years hence — if anybody is alive to care then — it will be known whether he might not long since have stopt the Prussian truculence towards us by a show of courage.

Present War.' See, Royce, *The Hope of the Great Community* (1916), a collection of his notable utterances on the war. Royce died on September 14, 1916.

You can't very well realize how exasperating it is for an old Yankee to be living among aliens, mongrels and plotters who are thus far allowed to do what they like. It reminds me of crossing ice which has begun to rot and to develop teetery-benders.

Perhaps before this reaches you we shall be at war — but I don't believe Germany hankers for it. At any rate, please assure your Britishers that we have here a very *mottled* population, from which, thus far, no homogeneous patriotic expression can be extracted.

All this week, also, I have been following the fighting at Verdun, and have felt ashamed to think of those splendid Frenchmen dying by thousands for all of us here and never having an articulate 'Thank you!' from us. But the thanks are in our hearts, altho' we can't get the Gov^{t} to speak out for us.

The past three months I have been unburdening my conscience by dictating a philippic — 'Germany *vs.* Civilization' — which Houghton & Mifflin are rushing through the press, in the expectation that it may be the book of the hour. I think they are over-sanguine; but at least whoever reads it will see that one American is neither blind, dumb nor ungrateful.

You shall have a copy as soon as it comes out, and if you hear thereafter that I have been dynamited or that 8 Berkeley Street has been burnt down you will guess the reason. . . .

In March, 1916, Thayer published a vigorous indictment against Germany under the title 'Germany *vs.* Civilization, Notes on the Atrocious War.' It was destined to a large circulation and a wide influence. It is frequently referred to in the correspondence as the 'little book,' or as the

'little red book.' It was a pamphlet of over two hundred and thirty pages.

To John Muirhead

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *March* 31, 1916

I am sending you a little book, which may help to persuade some of our British friends that all Yankees have not forgotten that we Anglo-Saxons (I wish there were a better word) are of one blood — spiritual, if not physiological. I too had my part in Magna Charta.

I hope you are all well, and especially that you get good news from your boy in the field. I envy him — and all the others — who are fighting for the Cause which must be won, if life is to be worth living.

The situation here is most entangled, but *Americanism* is coming forward, and Kaiserism, Bryanism, &c, are on the wane. T. R. will be the next President — on the ground that he is American and has Courage — unless Hughes can be induced to run.

My wife sends cordial greetings to yours — We see the beginning of the end of Prussianism at Verdun, and now the British show signs of activity in Flanders. The Tirpitz maniacal outbreak signifies — I think — desperation: I don't believe that England can be conquered by it.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *April* 24, 1916

DEAR MARGARET:

. . . Over here we are awaiting calmly the Kaiser's reply to Wilson's — shall I call it 'ultimatum'? His notes all seem to have a false bottom, which conceals addenda, postscripts and hooks on which to hang new skeins of word-weaving. But perhaps this time he is in earnest.

I have long hoped for a break in diplomatic relations; but if it comes, what will happen to the poor Belgians, a million or more of whom we have kept from starving to death, and to the English prisoners in Germany? The sooner our people realize the grim fact of this world war, the better; otherwise, there will be a terrible awakening here. Nobody wants war; and those of us who are urging the duty and pressing need of preparedness are in a small minority. Still, we have T. R. hammering away on our side, and I for one believe that his election as President will do more than anything else to restore the backbone to this country which Wilson and Bryan have reduced to a jellyfish.

How splendid is the staunchness of France at Verdun, — and everywhere. . . .

Here we're celebrating W. Shakespeare, a somewhat uncredentialed youth of Stratford-on-Avon, whose name and work have strangely outlasted kingdoms and empires and the ambitions of would-be world-conquerors, and even many fashions in religion.

Forbes-Robertson is to play *Hamlet* tonight and tomorrow night at Sanders Theatre, and you can imagine us all sitting up in our gala dresses and looking as proud and self-satisfied as if we had personally and collectively written William's plays. . . .

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASS^TTS: *May* 21, 1916

. . . Our next excitement will be the Republican Convention, which opens at Chicago a fortnight from tomorrow. Roosevelt is my first choice, but I doubt whether he can be nominated.

We had a great Commemoration of the sinking of the

Lusitania on May 7th. I presided, and Tremont Temple was well filled — 2200 persons or more. James M. Beck (author of 'The Evidence in the Case') made the speech of the day. It was a great satisfaction to stand up and speak out: for, altho' many persons think much as we do, most of them keep discreetly mum. . . .

Bess and I are going tomorrow to Irvington-on-Hudson to spend a week with the Carroll Dunhams.

I was delighted to hear the other day that 'John Hay' is being printed in Braille for the blind. To bring entertainment to them — as his sparkling letters must — is something I never even thought of. If I lose my other eye, I may be able to read the book myself — which I have not done since it was published. I am told that it is interesting.[1]

To Mrs. J. D. Cameron

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *June* 12, 1916

DEAR MRS. CAMERON:

I intended weeks ago to acknowledge your second letter with its further comment on the 'Hay.' I am most grateful for criticism, be it *pro* or *con*. After all, a biographer competes with life — and you knew the *living* person.

No doubt, the presentation of a man's career, in a two-volume biography, may seem unwarrantedly to give him heroic proportions. I tried to obviate this by inserting as

[1] In an undated note in Thayer's journal for 1916 there is the following item: 'William Roscoe Thayer's *Life and Letters of John Hay* is being put into Braille type for the blind, in which form it will make, when complete, ten volumes. The publishers, Houghton Mifflin Co., sent an unbound set of the two volumes to the National Library for the Blind in Washington, and there it was divided into sections and sent out to many blind workers, who will perform the task of transcribing it into Braille.

'This announcement, made after the book had been only six or seven months in circulation, pleased me more than anything else could. To bring solace to the blind, is better than to have the praise of all the reviewers.'

many every day, *homely* details as possible. Certainly, I can say that I did not purposely magnify him. He seems to me one of the most *interesting* men America has produced, but in no sense heroic.

Of course, you and other intimates, who saw him familiarly and in many moods, had no sense of the heroic. And yet — on the other side — I get letters from admirers who scold me for not making him the very great man — hero, even — they expected to find.

My intention was simply to give, from beginning to end, the elements in his career and the citations from his letters, from which each reader could form an independent judgment of what sort of man John Hay was.

The 'Charles Adams' I referred to was C. F. A., Senior — not 'Charlie,' the nephew, who is purely a business man. I hear very favorable news of Mr. Henry Adams, who appears to be unusually well. Apparently, a certain variety of patriarch doesn't begin to flourish until he has had a stroke or two. The autobiography of his brother (C. F. A., Senior) has doubtless reached you. It has scandalized some of our good Bostonians, who admit that it is true, but that Mr. Adams ought not to have said so.

If you have an opportunity, please thank Mrs. Wharton for her kind message. I envy you, and her, and all who are working for the French, close to their needs. Incomparable France! Our country is dead to the sense of chivalry, but some of us feel, and know and will never forget what we owe her.

Everyone here — except of course the Teutons — believes that the Allies are certain to win. When? Nobody predicts; but if the present Russian Drive goes forward unchecked, the end may be nearer than is now thought probable.

I am taking the liberty of sending you a little book which contains nothing you do not know; but possibly it will hint to some of your French acquaintances that the *real* Americans are with the Allies heart and soul.

To John Jay Chapman

MAGNOLIA, MASS., *June* 29, 1916

DEAR JACK CHAPMAN:

I have had you much in mind these past days, and I wish to send you my deepest sympathy.[1]

Of Victor, I can only think with a high sense of satisfaction. He could not have had a happier death. At twenty-four to see the noblest cause for which men ever fought, to devote himself to it, and to give his life for it, was to fulfil whatever duty and chivalry can ask.

As long as any of us live who knew you or him, the recollection of his brief and splendid career will shine on. And what an example it will be for many of the young fellows! Faithfully yours

WM. R. THAYER

To H. Nelson Gay

MAGNOLIA, *Aug.* 10, 1916
Cavour's Birthday

Your letter of July 8th from Rapallo came two days ago — a long month in crossing. I am glad that you left Rome early, and took Donna Eugenia to the Riviera. . . . You ask about my eye. A little more than a year ago, on going

[1] Victor Chapman, Harvard, 1913, son of John Jay Chapman, had at the very beginning of the war entered the Foreign Legion. He later became a member of the Franco-American Aviation Corps. He was killed at Verdun on June 23, 1916, and fell within the German lines. He was in his twenty-seventh year. For his life see *Victor Chapman's Letters from France, with Memoir*, by John J. Chapman (1917).

downstairs to breakfast, everything suddenly looked black. On testing, I found that a black band hung over my right eye. The oculist reported several hemorrhages — one of which had destroyed the retina. So there was no possibility that the absorption of blood-clots would do any good; and ever since I have been practising monocular vision. . . .

When the break came, I had fortunately gone so far with 'John Hay' that, aided by a good secretary, I could complete it; but I chafed at being forbidden to read proofs, knowing that slips would occur, as they did. On the whole, however, the book came out far more clean than I had a right to hope, and as it had 15 printings in five months, I was able to correct the errata as fast as they were pointed out.

I had a secretary till the middle of March, and dictated to her my indictment of Germany.[1] I never dictated before, and don't believe in it for anyone who wishes to hammer his thought out to its very best; but the little red book, judging from what many critics here say of it, and I hear from Englishman like Bryce and Cromer, doesn't wholly lack the qualities it ought to have. . . .

Just now, I am working at some lectures, which I expect to give this winter — as there has grown up a demand for them. I have had many urgent requests to write other biographies,[2] but I've declined them all. I can't settle down to any long work while the War pre-occupies my

[1] *Germany* vs. *Civilization*.

[2] In an entry in his journal under date of November 6, 1917, Thayer says: 'I have been trying to remember the different biographies I have been asked to write. Here they are — or nearly all. George P. Marsh; John Fiske; Edward Atkinson; Senator Burrows, of Michigan; Joseph H. Choate; Grover Cleveland; S. Weir Mitchell; Edwin L. Godkin; J. D. Rockefeller; Charlotte Cushman; Gov. Endicott.

'What a gallery they would make if one could write a life as easily as paint a portrait.'

thoughts; also, until I feel more certain than I do now that my orphan eye will hold out. A strain, due to ptomaine poisoning, which made me violently sick, is supposed to be the cause of my explosion. . . .

To Mrs. J. D. Cameron

MAGNOLIA, MASS^TTS: *August* 11, 1916

DEAR MRS. CAMERON:

Your letter of July 16, from Chamonix, followed close on the Report of the 'Hostels.' I trust that the Swiss air has already restored your daughter. If outward Nature could prevail over our inner human passion and stress, the sight of those everlasting mountains ought to bring calm to you war workers.

The Report — with that frightful experience described in the passage you marked — made an indelible impression on me. Will you please use the enclosed little draft as you see fit? If I could send a million, it would not express the obligation that I personally feel for France — as the defender of civilization — or my admiration for the fortitude with which you women are ministering to the victims of the Barbarians. I think it would be much easier to fight in the trenches than to work among the sufferers as you do.

Faithfully yours WM. R. THAYER

The good news of the Italians' capture of Gorizia came yesterday — Cavour's birthday.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

MAGNOLIA, MASS^TTS: *Sept.* 21, 1916

. . . Margaret Thayer has wrenched her knee — sliding to first base! One of the horrible dangers which even my prolific forebodings-factory never foresaw.

I have taken to breakfasting. One week, I was summoned to the Copley-Plaza to take an early meal with T. R.; the next week, I sat next to Gov. Hughes at the same place, just before he started on a great campaign Down East. The papers didn't say so, but I think there can be no doubt that I gave each of those great men just the advice he was hankering after. As we parted, each took my hand in his two, and pressed it with all the thrilling fervor of a dear woman and all the strength of a vigorous man.

A new vocation seems to beckon me, and I have prepared the following card for the papers:

BREAKFASTING A SPECIALTY

A Gentleman of Parts is open to engagements at breakfasts, formal or cosey. A good mixer; very discreet; speaks his mother tongue and several languages; has traveled extensively; has the chameleon's faculty of taking the color of the opinion of those round him; bristles with anecdotes; a judicious provider of chestnuts and *marrons glacés*, which he has collected on three continents; possesses a keen sense of humor, which he discreetly veils from those who have none; EXCELS AS A LISTENER — the highest quality in a conversationalist; equally good at head-to-heads, square parties, and breakfast banquets. *Being on a diet, consumes few victuals.* Terms moderate, on application; vary with the difficulty and dulness of his commensals. His presence suffices to set the seal of fashion on any job-lot gathering, and to shed lustre on any group of aristocratic boneheads. Refers by permission to Mrs. M. M. R. F.; H. M. King Victor Emanuel II; 9 Ambassadors; 7 bishops; 1 town clerk; and the late Miss Palfrey.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASS^TTS: *Oct.* 25, 1916

. . . Can't you, by wireless or absent treatment persuade a few thousand doubtful voters in the 'pivotal states' to support Hughes? It looks close now; and I am anxious over the possibility that Wilson — whose veracity is as rotary as a pinwheel, and whose courage outquivers the aspen — may be re-elected. But we deserve even this punishment for our national backsliding since July, 1914. . . .

To H. Nelson Gay

CAMBRIDGE, *Oct.* 30, 1916

. . . I am waiting anxiously for next Tuesday, Nov. 7th., election day. The best guessers now think Hughes will win; but Wilson has gained greatly during the past six or seven weeks, and he has a most seductive slogan — 'I have kept you out of war' — to capture the timid, the peace-at-any-pricers, the unthinking, the sordid — and many worthy people besides. Pres. Eliot has come out for him — chiefly on the tariff issue, and his opinion carries weight; and yet at the Saturday Club luncheon last Saturday, a straw vote showed 14 in favor of Hughes and only 3 — including Eliot — in support of Wilson.

You may be amused to hear that I have written two political philippics, which seem to have had success, as both of them have been issued as Republican campaign documents. For the first time in my life, I shall vote the Republican ticket. Of course, it wrenches me to walk to the polls with the advocates of Protection — but a historian must have some regard for perspective, and, as I see it, Protection is a minor issue this time. If we don't recover our national honor and self-respect, and if we don't

suppress the influences which are trying to split this country into its component racial parts, it will matter little whether we have a high tariff or a low one. . . .

To Henry W. Sprague

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *Nov.* 25, 1916

DEAR HENRY:[1]

I was very grateful to you for your letter from New York. I regretted not being able to attend the services, and especially not to see you — for my first thought at funerals now is of the living rather than of the dead. I sympathize deeply with you over Carl's death, for I know that you have always been a most affectionate and loyal brother to him; and although he has been away from Buffalo for some time, the sense of *immediate* loss will be very keen with you.

For me, it seems as if I were losing my college days over again — he and I were so close during more than half of my Harvard course. We did everything together, and — as you know — we got more out of undergraduate fun than most fellows do. Carl's reputation for wit has been a permanent possession of '81; so that at all our subsequent reunions in later years, the question uppermost always was: 'Where's Carl? Isn't he coming?'

My dear Henry, you and I both discovered long ago that there is nothing so precious as friendship in this strange life of ours. Looking back, I am struck by the number of friends I have had, who have done so much for me, with so little return — and, somehow, these early friendships have a quality which rarely returns afterward. . . .

[1] A letter of condolence. The subject of it was Carleton Sprague, a classmate of Thayer at Harvard, a brother of Henry W. Sprague.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
Nov. 30, 1916. *Thanksgiving*

Although turkeys are 40 cents plus per pound, we wish you were here, with your most voracious appetite to join in our Thanksgiving Dinner.

Thanksgiving? The word has a mocking sound for those of us who realize in the least degree how many millions of Europeans are in want, or in distress of heart and mind. But I do give thanks that the great British Nation has roused itself, and has pledged to see this thing through, at whatever cost, and that France has glorified humanity in her splendid heroism this past year.

We are at fever heat over the deportation of the Belgians. If words could blast, the hosts of the Kaiser would be destroyed as Sennacherib's were. I helped to organize another mass meeting in Tremont Temple — we held it Tuesday evening — and we said what we meant to say, what a large audience cheered over and over again to hear. Nathan Matthews and Moorfield Storey and George Gordon were the chief speakers, and we got a list of some 40 persons, who won't flinch, to sign the call.

This seems a small thing, but who knows? I still have faith in the penetrating power of righteousness, and we may start a protest which will cause Wilson to act firmly towards the unspeakable Huns. . . .

To Margaret W. Thayer

WASHINGTON, D.C., *Jan.* 26, 1917

DEAREST LITTLE BEAR:

My speech seemed to go pretty well — chiefly because it happened that I said just what the enthusiastic audience

Staff of The Lampoon, 1881

Left to right, standing: *L. J. Bridgeman*, *Curtis Guild, Jr.* Seated: *William R. Thayer*, *Morton S. Crehore* (on cushion), *William W. Kent*, *Charles A. Coolidge*, *Carleton Sprague*.

HARPOON

wanted to hear.[1] One Young Yidd had a U.S. flag, bigger than three bandannas, and whenever anything pleased him, he waved it broadcast over the heads of the persons near him and shouted Yiddish shout of joy. (I think he was Ikkie's cousin.)

It was very grand to see Pippa and Re sitting in state in the swell box, looking much as if they were queening it over the whole throng.

Afterwards, Gussie Gardner invited me to a symposium at the Alibi Club, which is a rollicking body with a tiny clubhouse, darker than the Tavern Club. There were some 40 ladies and men — including Senator and Mrs. Root — and we all had buckwheat cakes and sausages — like mother used to make — and champagne, such as she never drank with either. I got home at quarter past midnight. This is a beautiful morning — thoroughly Washingtonian, and reminds me of those mild, sunny winter days in Rome. This afternoon Re has a reception for Pippa; tonight, the Danforths give a dinner for us. I lunch with ex-Secretary D. J. Hill at the Metropolitan, and then go to Dr. Wilmer — the 'king of oculists' — to find out how much eyesight I have left.

I hope the furnace was repaired promptly, and that you kept warm all the time. We are expecting another letter from you this afternoon.

Ever with Capital love

Your

Babbo Orso

[1] At a Congress of Constructive Patriotism held by the National Security League in Washington in January, 1917, Thayer delivered, on January 25th, an address on 'America's International Relations.' This address is included in his *Volleys from a Non-Combatant*, Chap. II, pp. 44–66.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

TAVERN CLUB, 4 BOYLSTON PLACE
Feb. 4, 1917. *Noon*

Half an hour ago the papers issued extras to announce that Wilson has broken off relations with Germany. So at last the lost vertebra has been found in the White House. GLORIA IN EXCELSIS!

But it is a solemn moment. We ought to have done this after the *Lusitania* was sunk. We have a poor fleet and small army; but perhaps Providence — which has looked after children, drunkards and Americans — will be good to us a little longer. At any rate, the world at last must recognize that we officially uphold honor.

I don't believe that the Germans can keep it up two months more — if your English merchantmen are armed and wary. Do persuade your Gov^{t} to publish the number of submarines destroyed from day to day. The Germans announce their bag of neutral ships in every paper, and our public gets the impression that the Allies are helpless. I am wondering whether the Boches here may spring some surprise on us.

Bess and I had a wonderful week in Washington — home day before yesterday. Root made a great anti-German speech; I followed in the same strain, and some of the pro-Germans demanded that 'Root and Thayer be repudiated.' But we still live. . . .

To H. Nelson Gay

CAMBRIDGE, *Feb.* 8, 1917

Just after I wrote to you the other day the package of Cavour *opuscoli* came from you. I was very glad to get them, first, because they are an actual sign that you still

live; and next, because they brought back to me the recollection of my many years' companionship with that great man. No one else — no other subject — can ever fill my mind and heart as he did; although when we were at Mt. Vernon the other day, I was so greatly impressed by the reality of Washington, that I wish I were young enough and strong enough to devote half a dozen years to him, in the hope that I might be able in some measure to make him live for this and later generations. He and Lincoln and Cavour are the great moderns, the justifiers of Liberty, the pioneers and champions of Democracy. If we only knew more about Vettor Pisani, the incomparable medieval, I would include him too, because his self-abnegation seems to me the highest pitch of patriotism. . . .

So, speaking of you, has turned my thoughts away from the War, the topic which clings to us all like a nettle shirt. At last we Americans can look up unashamed, but there is a great ruck of *tristi* — pacifists, Boches, Bryanites, and snakes hatched from the old copperhead eggs — who are busy trying to undermine and denature our little experiment in courage, dignity and honor. . . .

To Theodore W. Richards

CAMBRIDGE: *Feb.* 27, 1917

DEAR SIR:

Hearing that you have more inflooence than anyone else in awarding the Nobel Prizes,[1] I write to present the claims of a person whose unique qualifications are equaled only by his modesty. He has indeed, threefold claims, viz:

[1] Professor Richards had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Science in 1915. There are three Nobel Prizes, one for Science, one for Literature, and one for the most signal contribution to the cause of peace.

I. *For Science. a.* He has discovered that the atrocious and homicidal characteristics of the Prussians come from their saturation by Prussic Acid (HCN), which they absorb through a special gland.

b. That other Germans acquire this virus through the process of secondary osmosis.

c. Preventives and cure.

II. *For the Peace Prize.* He has discovered how to ensure peace that will be of long duration, if not perpetual, by removing the bellicose instincts of the Germans. (Infallible remedy.)

III. *Prize for Literature.* He has written these monographs in a literary style hitherto unapproached. It combines the charm of Stevenson with the clarity of Swift, the precision of Todhunter, the color of Burke, and the persuasiveness of Richards.*

Your Committee may hesitate to bestow three Prizes on one Candidate. This candidate might be persuaded to accept the honor, and to relinquish 40% of the emolument, in case all three prizes were assigned to him, and 25% if only two were.

He is prepared to impart to you under oath to keep the strictest secrecy the formulas and demonstrations.

He has many minor achievements which would entitle him to a prize. E.g. He has expurgated the Protestant Hymnal of all warlike phrases or suggestions. Thus, under his magic wand, 'Onward Christian Soldiers!' becomes 'Onward Christian Chemists!' etc. etc.

If you care for particulars, address 'Modest Mignon,' c/o T. Roscoe William.

P. O. Box o
Cambridge

* Nobody has ever disproved any of these statements.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
March 9, 1917

. . . At Carnegie Hall, New York, the other evening, we had a tremendous meeting — 4000 persons or more whom we kept surging with enthusiasm like wheat before strong gusts of south wind.[1] I have never seen anything like it, and it was more exhilarating than you can guess to stand on that platform facing that vast crowd and fire words at them at which they rose up and roared with enthusiasm. One speaker who got on the list by mistake, tried to palliate Wilson's dilatoriness and to remind us that many of the Germans were probably sincere. He didn't go any farther, the thousands shouted, hissed and booed and he had to wait ten minutes before they let him conclude.

I said 'we,' but don't suppose that I meant the editorial 'we.' My own share was slight, but when I remarked that W. J. Bryan is the missing link between Pacifism and Prussianism there was great hilarity, with cheerful shouts of 'Traitor!' and 'Hang him!' Major George H. Putnam who presided, Lyman Abbott, and, above all, James M. Beck, who made a truly remarkable speech, were the stars of the evening. . . .

This meeting proves as all others have which I have attended, that our people are sound and will rise to every appeal to their honor and conscience. If Wilson would only recognize this fact; but how can he see things as they are when he keeps hiding under the bed? . . .

[1] A meeting held under the auspices of the American Rights League, March 5, 1917.

To Theodore Roosevelt

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
March 23, 1917

DEAR THEODORE:

. . . Of course I agree with you as to our national humiliation under Wilson. If ever a nation deserved to be smashed and trampled, it is this: and yet I hope that the too well merited havoc won't come. America, even in eclipse, holds the world's hope of regeneration.

I envy you your proposed work in the army. Had I any physical strength I should enlist. But with only one eye and 20 years of invalidism, I am but a poor fragment, who have only my tongue and pen to serve with. You are right: we must have troops fighting in France, side by side with the Allies, before the War ends. I wish I could be even a drummer-boy there.

To Theodore Roosevelt

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
April 2, 1917

DEAR THEODORE:

. . . I am waiting for Congress to act. A private letter from Wilson received here on Friday by a well-known Bostonian, leads us to expect that Wilson will advocate war: but who knows? In three days he can turn several back somersaults. His vindictive degradation of Wood at this time is amazing. If he intends to make the war a series of punitive operations against his political opponents and personal antipathies, we shan't have much chance to use our handicapped Army and Navy to as good purpose as we need. I hope he won't succeed in 'interning' you. I should like to see you lead at least an army corps to France, to be trained *there*. The appearance of the Stars

and Stripes in the trenches, where the Boches could see it, ought to set them thinking, even tho' our soldiers weren't ready to fight before October.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.
April 8, 1917. *Easter*

We are with you at last! I feel that you must be gloating last Tuesday morning when you read in your paper Wilson's Message to Congress, and again, on Friday, when the news reached you that he had signed the joint resolution which brought us into the war.

Among us there was a long, satisfactory taking of breath, and a lifting from the diaphragm of a very heavy weight — the freeing of conscience, if that be her abode, after these many, many, many weary months.

Didn't you think Wilson completely suffocated Autocracy in the fold of the great banner of Democracy? I hadn't given him credit for so much finesse.

Up to the last moment we were in suspense, because Wilson's skill at trimming was known and Congress was beset by troops of Pacifists — many of whom were very thinly disguised Prussians. The ball opened when Senator Lodge, half an hour before Congress convened, floored a Pacifist who had struck him in the face. Lodge has been our chief bulwark in Congress during the past two years, and I sometimes start to think how few years ago it was since I thought him an undesirable politician. But the War has created new perspectives for us all.

Now the country has begun to get ready. (Think of Wilson's allowing 2 years and 8 months to pass without preparation!) . . .

To Theodore Roosevelt

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *May* 1, 1917

DEAR THEODORE:

I am watching with great interest the question of an expedition to France. It ought to be sent. If we have only 5000 men there, the moral effect will be priceless, — first, for us, next, for the French. This is a case — the rarest case — where a symbol — our expeditionary force — will have immense significance.

Of course, I don't need to tell *you* this — but I don't know anybody in Washington whom my words could influence. Of course, too, I want you to go with the expedition — as chief, if you are up to the military — technical — part of it; but go, in any capacity. Tho' you went as a drummer boy, the French and Boches and the world would quickly recognize that you are a great, authentic *hunk* of America. I hope the Fates (who are shrewish old women, so that we can't always count on their benevolence) will be kind to you and to us.

I was amused the other day to receive a letter from a New York lawyer, who had just read the John Hay Life — apparently with enthusiasm, for he wrote: 'I don't want anybody to die, but I wish that you (W. R. T.) could write the life of T. R. *in 20 volumes.*'!!!!

He little knows that a special Briareus-Argus-Methuselah biographer will have to be propagated to do that.

Good luck! Yours ever

WM. R. THAYER

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *May* 7, 1917

... Yesterday, I went to a very noble and moving service in St. Paul's Cathedral, Boston, for the First Hospital

Unit which leaves Boston today for France. There were tears in many eyes — including mine; and I think that many a derelict envied, as I did, those young men and women who had strength enough to go. Bishop Lawrence addressed the men in words that they and I will never forget.

Dr. Harvey Cushing leads the Unit, and will be the first to plant our flag — officially — Somewhere in France. Do you know him? The greatest surgeon in his field in America, and a dear fellow, of whom I am very fond.

All that an aged derelict like me seems fitted to do is to ply the bellows and increase the patriotic fires here. That, too, will be necessary. . . . But derelicts could at least jump overboard — if the supreme pinch came. Have you heard of that magnificent heroism of the English aviator who jumped out of the aeroplane when he found the German plane was getting the advantage because it had only one man, while his plane had two? I wish I knew his name. . . .

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASS^TTS: *May* 20, 1917

. . . This has been another week of surprises. The event which we shall remember longest is Joe Choate's death, at near midnight last Monday. Here are several newspaper clippings about him. I like especially that snapshot of him and Balfour in the auto, in which he has a wonderful resemblance — at least in the nose and eyes and maturely ironical expression — to Mr. Punch.

Was ever a man more fortunate? During the visit of the French and English to New York City, he took part in all the great celebrations; made half a dozen speeches; ate ceremonial luncheons and dinners; and was — next to the great foreigners themselves, — the most conspicuous fig-

ure. Last Sunday he went to church with Mr. Balfour. Monday he didn't feel very well; staid at home; grew worse; towards evening angina pectoris set in, and he died. He was buried on his place at Stockbridge, having previously had a private funeral — which was really national — in New York City. Did ever any other 85-year-older purchase final peace at less cost?

Our great festival was for Joffre. He came to the South Station before 8 A.M.; was motored to Harry Sears's house in Beacon Street, which was his hotel; snatched (presumably) a hasty, if not humble crust, and then was put into the municipal shoot the shoots, and was kept whirling for eight hours. A luncheon at Faneuil Hall, an official welcome at the State House, a 'look-in' here, a hand-shake there, reviews and all those other forms of torture devised by Americans to make a foreign hero feel that he is appreciated. I don't think the Marshal would have had time to fish his handkerchief out of his inside pocket if he had needed it.

At last, on the verge of collapse, he asked to be taken to the house; and there he rested himself on the Sears' bed for over an hour, took a cup of tea, screwed up his courage; and faced the rest of the ordeal. He reached Cambridge an hour and a half late to find us — that is, the Corporation, Overseers and several thousand graduates and students waiting for him. The Harvard Regiment marched in fine order before him; and then we all went over to Sanders Theatre, and saw the LL.D. conferred upon him in a most impressive ceremony. Then he was whirled over to Soldiers' Field, where he was expected to review the regiment; but it was too late — time for him to reach the reception and dinner at the Copley-Plaza. At ten o'clock, still alive, he entrained, as they say now, on a special for

Montreal. I suspect that he recalled the fatigues of the Battle of the Marne with longing.

He is a splendid looking old fellow — and not so very old either; sixty-five last birthday — with a great stout frame and a massive head. His face looks good-natured, tranquil, but with unlimited courage and persistence in the will behind it. His pleasant blue-gray eyes also seem to be capable of seeing clear to the horizon. His hair and mustache are blond, his cheeks healthily pink — tho' very tired on that afternoon. Here was the most important figure in history since Napoleon, and one who has done so much more for civilization than Nap. ever did. For Joffre has done for our age, what Miltiades did for his age — and all posterity — in driving back the Barbarians at Marathon. . . .

Over here, Wilson warms and cools from hour to hour. And thro' it all — tho' I see the possible dangers, I believe that our Cause will win. This afternoon, I'm going down to talk to the congregation of the Negro Baptist Church in the Lower Port on Patriotism. I'm scared almost as much as if I were to address the Harvard Corporation, which I regard as an audience so preternaturally cold that a boiling geyser would freeze in its presence. — But — the still small voice whispers 'Clean up your desk.' So goodbye and God bless you all.

To Theodore Roosevelt

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *May* 25, 1917

DEAR THEODORE:

John Morley, on a memorable occasion, remarked that you and Niagara Falls were the two great sights in America. I am introducing to you Professor Blanchard, who doesn't even whisper 'Niagara,' but tells me frankly that

you are the one person he would like to meet. He has been the French Exchange Professor at Harvard this half-year, and we have found him most intelligent and sympathetic.

He is a military specialist, and his analysis of the War operations is keen. He gave some Lowell Institute Lectures on the War on the Western Front which were very informing.

I have told him that, as you are the busiest of men, you may be unable to see him; but if you have a few minutes to spare, you will give him great pleasure.

Gratefully yours

Wm. R. Thayer

To Mrs. Michael Foster

Cambridge, Mass., *May* 27, 1917

. . . The Russian palsy is hard to put up with; but good may come of it, after all; for the present Russian demands seem likely to detach Austria and Turkey from the German Alliance. But I don't prophesy. Our mysterious old Friend — I speak politely — Destiny, has a way of upsetting all the prophets. All that I predict is that, sooner or later, and better sooner than later, our Cause will win. 'C'est sur,' says Commandant Azan, one of the French officers — who has been four times wounded and carries his left hand in an odd, surgical cage — now here to teach the Harvard Regiment how to fight.

It brings my heart into my throat to see the battalion march down to the Stadium every day — a fine looking lot of fellows, many of them unusually tall. I am proud of them, I envy them, and I think of what may happen to them before the year is out. There is no doubt that we shall have a large contingent in France before the end of the year, tho' Wilson and the Departments seem fright-

fully slow. But they can't back out now. Mr. Balfour — who has gone to Canada on his way home — gave to the newspaper men a farewell interview, in which he praised the alacrity with which we have got ready. It sounds like flattery — but then, politeness often does, and he has been perfect in his discretion and manners during his stay here.

Last night, Bess and I dined with Denman Ross to meet M. Hovelacque, one of the French mission, a man who spoke English better than any of us, and with a voice which the PRIMO BARITONO of Gabriel's quartet might envy. All the Frenchmen who have come over here are so civilized, so restrained, such fundamental gentlemen. . . .

To John Jay Chapman

MAGNOLIA, MASS., *Aug.* 21, 1917

DEAR JACK:

They have just finished reading Victor's *Letters* to me — you see how long a time it takes for desultory volunteer readers to get through. I am truly grateful to you for publishing those letters which have added to my group of friends by revealing to me that rare, young character. The fact that they are written with perfect naturalness, vividness, simplicity and charm adds of course to the satisfaction of reading them. Thank heaven that Victor escaped the Stevensonian veneer which the English Department of Harvard and other Universities have laid over their pupils in the astonishing belief that they were thereby providing them with 'style.'

For your sake and ours I wish Victor had outlived the war; but for him I can conceive of no more enviable ending than he had. In this world of shifting values, temptations, deceits, backslidings, and sudden reversals, what could be more enviable than at twenty-five to have laid hold of that

which is permanent, which is more precious than anything else in life, and to prove your faith by dying for it? And dying so naturally too, as if taking that last flight were no more than running from one base to another.

What a keen eye he was developing for nature, and with what a large genial hospitality he accepted those strange creatures in the Foreign Legion and everybody else? How fresh and unechoed his hasty word outlines of scenery and his passing allusions to books.

I am grateful to you and to him. Good-bye.

WM. ROSCOE THAYER

P.S. Shelley in 'Adonais' said much that I feel about the dead who die young.

By the way your poem in the August *Atlantic* touched me to the quick;[1] but if I could write poems now, which I can't, because I can't dictate poetry, I would sing songs triumphant rather than elegiac.

To Sir Cecil Spring-Rice

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *Sept.* 15, 1917

MY DEAR SIR CECIL:

May I ask you for information which I cannot get here? We have raised an acre of potatoes which we wish to distribute among our friends who may need them. We wish to send ten barrels to Mrs. Michael Foster at Cambridge, England. She is a life-long friend of Mrs. Thayer's and was the wife of Governor William E. Russell of Massachusetts. After his death she married Dr. Foster, the son of Sir Michael Foster, your famous physiologist at Cambridge, England. Dr. Foster has had charge of a base hospital at Cambridge and was recently assigned to similar duties in

[1] *May, 1917*, by John Jay Chapman.

France. Mrs. Foster had been indefatigable in helping the wounded, the refugees and the needy English themselves. So I feel sure that a supply of potatoes will not go amiss and no one could distribute them more judiciously than she. Will the British Government permit me to ship them, and how?

Also, Mrs. Walker, one of our neighbors, has three or four trunkfuls of new clothing for Mrs. Foster to distribute. Can these be shipped? If duty must be paid on them over there, cannot some arrangement be made by which it shall be prepaid here, and so not fall on the recipient?

Please excuse me for bothering you. I regretted that your stay had to be so short at Commencement, but I hope that when leisure comes you will visit Cambridge again. I have seen Henry Adams several times this summer and found him remarkably well. It looks to me as if the *dégringolade* of the Boches has begun. It will go on accelerating. How neatly this Swedish complot has been turned against the Swedes and their seducers.

To John Jay Chapman

MAGNOLIA, MASS., *Sept.* 18, 1917

MY DEAR JACK:

I am proud to have you submit your Ode to me.[1] I shall have it read to me two or three times and then will let you know what I think of it. I much prefer to read to myself in order to form an opinion, but that isn't possible now; I wish you could read it to me, for I haven't forgotten, and I never shall forget, the hypnotic impressiveness of your rendering of *Benedict Arnold*.

Oddly enough, I was this morning revolving a poem 'To

[1] 'Ode on the Sailing of Our Troops for France.' Published in *North American Review*, November, 1917.

Our Fellows First In France,' and I was repeating stray lines which might fit into it, here and there. The subject took hold of my heart a good while ago, and after I finished Victor's *Letters* I believe I could have written a real poem if I were allowed to use the pen. But I can do nothing by dictation, except these dreary letters. There are many poems in my heart, which I shall never be able to *verbalize*. The world will lose nothing; but the human minim in whom the emotions of former days still echo and rouse the illusion of potential creativeness, feels maimed, prevented, deceived. . . .

Harry Taylor and his wife were here last week, and we had a very merry time of it. Except the ant, I know of no creature who carries as much brain in proportion to his size as H. O. T. does, and even the ant, from my imperfect observation, is neither frolicsome nor jolly, as he is.

Good-bye. Now for your Ode!

To John Jay Chapman

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *Sept.* 27, 1917

DEAR JACK:

. . . I am delighted to know that the *North American Review* is going to print the Ode, and if you send me any reprints I shall circulate them proudly, after keeping one for myself. Your advice in regard to reading and writing poetry is fine and I hope to follow it, for the fact at the bottom of my heart is that poetry is my deepest interest. You say well that the Muse has to be wooed but I fear that like other of her sex she rather laughs behind her fan at the *engouement* of wooers of sixty. You of course are an exception in this case as in most others, and the Ode proves that you captivated the fancy of the perennially youthful

lady. Or was it your beard? If that's the secret then I am lost indeed for my wife won't let me wear even a tiny Imperial.

. . . In your letter the other day you referred to the *Risorgimento* and I was shocked, actually shocked, to see that you regard me as a sort of real estate agent who has encouraged the Italians to believe that the highest thing in life for them was to get all the real estate they could. Now, whatever readers may think I wrote 'Cavour' with absolutely no thesis to uphold. I was bent simply on getting inside of one of the most marvelous men who ever lived, of watching his motives and acts and of telling his story for the sake of the story. And I supposed that the narrative, besides showing what Cavour thought and did, making him live again, really live, would show how the love of Liberty with her inseparable companion Independence coming to a people downtrodden, debased, religionless, hopeless, would act as a great ideal, would *be* a religion and regenerate that people.

Of course the Italians in making themselves free had to own the land they stood on, and I have approved their efforts and sacrifices in order to win the Union without which their independence and their liberty would have been futile. That is the full extent to which my guilt as an alleged real estate boomer goes.

Let me recommend a re-reading of my two little volumes on Cavour some pleasant, cool morning. Seriously, I have never believed in the policy of national megalomania which Italian 'statesmen,' mostly demagogues, have pursued ever since Cavour died. Crispi was the worst of them all but I imagine that his vogue is passing, for the Italians now realize that it was he who brought the Prussian penetration upon them. . . .

In the fall of 1917 Thayer's nephew, E. Sohier Welch, of Boston, Harvard '09, sailed for France assigned to service in the American navy. Thayer made it a point to write him every week and to give him the information a man in such a position would wish to have, news of his family, of the temper and activity of his country, of the situation of the war in general as presented in the American press.

To E. Sohier Welch

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *October* 13, 1917

DEAR SOHIER:

I was just starting to write you this morning when your letter of Sept. 19th from a 'damned' port in France came. It brings me great joy; because I infer that your health is reasonably good although your mind relucts at the routine you are undergoing. . . .

I realize to the full your feelings and your aversion, and I feel almost ashamed to write to you, who are going and bearing the actual duty and burden of war, not to be discouraged and not to forget that you are engaged in work beside which all personal considerations sink into insignificance. In war or in peace the one highest thing possible for a man is to devote himself to the noblest ideals he can understand. This devotion becomes more apparent in war because it involves so many personal discomforts and sacrifices and serious risks; and so the patriot who undergoes all these and endures, earns the gratitude and admiration of all men — and, more precious still, the approval of his own conscience. This seems like sermonizing, but it is really the thought that is uppermost in my heart now and for a long time past.

I very greatly regret that I am too derelict now and too old to take active part in the War. I am still forbidden by

the doctors to speak at meetings or even to write articles which are likely to start up too much circulation in my eye — and this too is trying, but I hope that pretty soon the ban will be raised. . . .

I had this morning a letter from a well-known public man who saw President Wilson at the White House last week, and he writes me that from what Wilson said he is bent, not only on fighting this war through and rejecting all the insinuating proposals which would mean only a *German* peace, but also with full *Retribution* as his objective. Let that comfort you; for although we have not always agreed with President Wilson's policies, I think we have never doubted the strength of his obstinacy. . . .

To William Endicott

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *Oct.* 16, 1817

DEAR BILLY:

. . . Senator Lodge told the Historical Society the other day that Wilson, the Cabinet, and a large majority of Congress are firmly resolved to see the war through to victory. Wilson has not been, and will not be, fooled by any German peace. James Beck, who was at the White House ten days ago, wrote me to the same effect. Of the President's obstinacy there can be no doubt and if he will only *stay* obstinate on this line we shall all approve. I ought to say that Lodge spoke highly of McAdoo and said that he backed up the sober men in Congress who opposed all sorts of wildcat schemes.

Lansing doles out every few days new documents showing the shamelessness of the German plotters here and I think there can be no more illusions as to Bernstorff and the rest. . . .

The University started with a loss of nearly 2000 stu-

dents. It is doing its utmost to train young men for the War in many departments: 1600 radio fellows (not enrolled in the Harvard Catalogue) are rooming in Perkins Hall and the Gymnasium — where cots have been placed — and are eating at Memorial Hall. College commons have been transferred to the Harvard Union. Some forty professors are absent on service to the Government: 5600 Harvard men — including yourself — are listed as on war duty: so dear old Alma Mater still breeds sons who are true to their lineage. . . .

To E. Sohier Welch

CAMBRIDGE, *October* 20, 1917

The day after I wrote you last week, we motored out to Weston and saw Barbara and the children; all flourishing. There never was so fine a child as the youngest. He weighs as much now as the President's Thanksgiving turkey, and is a hundred times more beautiful. Little Barbara did various acrobatic feats for me on the rope and rings and she climbed up and sat on the little trellised entrance to the garden with much agility and without fear. Francis, too, started for the top of one of the trees — much to my alarm — but after he had gone a little way I told him I was sure he could do it all, and so he came down. With such a family to protect and defend, who would not go to the War? Don't ever imagine that you are wasting time or talent. You are really holding our first line of defense — a line which must never be broken, if all precious souls like Barbara and the children are to be saved from the most horrible menace that can be conceived of. . . .

. . . We had a rousing Loyalty meeting in Tremont Temple last week, when James Beck, of New York, set the most sluggish hearts throbbing with something very

like patriotic fervor. I only wish that I could take a small part in this work, as I did last year; but the doctors forbid. The oculist, however, reports that my good eye is improving and he actually allows me to read for five minutes at a stretch. I leave it to you as an experienced mathematician to compute how many centuries it would take at that rate to go through the hundred or so volumes of Dumas, *père*. But this is a hopeful sign, though a small one, and I am duly grateful for it. . . .

Senator Lodge told me last week that President Wilson, the Administration, and a very large majority of Congress, are resolved *to put this War through*. . . .

The flow of our troops to France continues unabated. Let me know whether books reach you, and if they do, whether there are any in particular you would like me to send. A compact edition of Boswell, if there is one in good type, ought to make a genial companion during your long hours of routine.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, *Oct.* 26, 1917

As an old Harvard man of tested loyalty you will doubtless feel as much satisfaction as I do, that nearly 6000 Harvard men are now serving our Government or driving ambulances, or flying for the French and English over there. They are old men and young and men of all ranks, from Major General Leonard Wood who has been snubbed off to the command of a distant Department by the over-jealous or over-zealous Administration to the boy who would be a freshman, if he weren't in the Radio Corps. With 2000 fellows in uniform occupying the College buildings, marching and drilling, and forever passing through Harvard Square and the Yard, this ordinarily humdrum old

place seems to be trying to play the rôle of an army post.

Harvard's really great contribution to military effectiveness has been in bringing over the French Officers who have trained hundreds of our officers in the ways of actual warfare. We hope that, as a result, when the American troops next spring attack the Boches they will lose far fewer men and do much more damage to the enemy than your gallant British recruits did, owing to lack of training at the start.

Our spasm at the moment is the raising of our Second Liberty Loan. For days past there have been meetings everywhere, appeals in the papers, personal solicitations, almost point blank stand-and-deliver demands at the point of a pistol. From the number of circulars we have received, I judge that at least a billion dollars has already been spent on printing, paper and postage. Wednesday was set apart as Liberty Day and we had a rally in Sanders Theatre. Bessie conducted a Bond sale in the vestibule of Memorial Hall and took in $19,000 in applications. When she makes up her mind to do anything, the Old Lady — if I may use that endearing term without disrespect — doesn't shirk or slump, and this time she had the weather against her, for a northeaster gale blew at sixty miles an hour and the rain quickly turned the streets into little rivers and Cambridge Common into an uncharted lake. So the attendance was small but her receipts were large. Lodge spoke very finely.

How this War has turned what we supposed to be the permanent pattern of our individual likes, dislikes, prejudices, and even beliefs, into a kaleidoscope which makes new combinations with every turn of time's whirligig! Lodge, who seemed to us Mugwumps and to hereditary old Democrats like you, much worse than a bogey, has

become in this crisis our chief statesman. Since the beginning of the War, since the days when Congress truckled and Wilson crawled, he has spoken out fearlessly to uphold American rights and patriotism and to support Civilization in its fight against the Prussian Monster. And more than once, as I happen to know, he has come to the aid of the Administration, whose timidity made it almost despised, and prevented the passage of pro-German measures. . . .

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *December* 13, 1917

. . . I sometimes wonder in the course of this War, with its swift onslaught of disasters, whether the human heart is not truly one of the toughest substances known, instead of being, as we were taught, an organ so delicate and tender that if the point of a needle should prick it, life would escape in a flash. But here we all are, you more than we, and the Belgians and the French more than you, with our hearts pounded and hammered, day after day, and week after week, for over forty months, and yet we still live and are able to do more with this battered muscle than we ever thought of doing in peace time. Perhaps if a surgeon were to cut us open he would find the toughest, leathery valves in place of the expected organ; if that were so, I hope that my post mortem would show that on the leather were scratched the initials of the very few who were dearest — like the initials which youths carve on the bark of trees — and besides them, 'Venice.' . . .

Pretty nearly everybody now has an army title and the less military the person the higher his rank. Majors and Colonels abound among the civilians. I am thinking of adopting for myself — since the Government seems to

have overlooked it — the venerable, noble and romantic title of Vavasour. It wouldn't conflict with Admiral, or Commodore, or Lieutenant-General, and would suggest something vaguely grand and important.

You ask about the 'Radio boys' as we call them. They are youths studying to become wireless operators — 'radio' being the short nickname for 'wireless telegraphy.' They are under the Navy — or, *in* it. Made up of all sorts. They number 2300 and we Cambridge men and girls have them to dinner, and in all ways try to amuse them, so that they shan't go to the devil — who lurks on the Cambridge streets in the shape of houris.

At a dance, one of the radio boys, who was whirling with a professor's demure daughter, said: 'Gee! I'm sweating like Hell!' Others are Chesterfields in manner; and all are very grateful for hospitality....

To Charles F. Thwing

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
December 17, 1917

Your note has just come.... Bismarck? I have often thought of him since the War began and, perhaps, I may decide to write another essay on him showing how his achievements and the compulsion of his colossal example prepared the Germans to catch the hideous disease of Pan-Germanism. But I can't write about him now and I could never think of undertaking a biography of him!... Like Crispi, he himself doctored — or shall I say polluted? — the sources, in the hope that posterity shall know him only as he wished to be known. It will take a revolution and the coming in of a hostile crowd who will ransack the archives and publish truthfully the secrets of the Hohen-

zollern régime to enable us to get at the facts about Prussia, Germany and Bismarck.

Do you remember how, in the days of the kingdom of Corea the person of the Queen was so sacred that even her physician was not allowed to look upon her. When she was sick, a small hole was made through a screen and through this the physician put his hand and felt her pulse; that was the only diagnosis he could make, but if he didn't prescribe right his head was cut off. Well, during the past seventy years, Clio has had to sit beside an impenetrable screen, on the other side of which Germany has lain and has whispered through a small orifice whatever she wished the Muse of History to accept as fact.

CHAPTER IX

THE CLOSING YEAR OF THE WAR

1918

The letters published in this chapter give Thayer's thoughts and impressions and activities during the closing year of the war. They will have their importance not only for those interested in his personality and career, but, like many of those printed in preceding chapters, for future historians who will be interested to see how the great events of the day appeared to an intelligent contemporary, and a member of their craft.

To Sir Cecil Spring-Rice

Cambridge, Mass., *January* 8, 1918

My dear Sir Cecil:

When I first read the report of your retirement I hoped that it was only a newspaper rumor, but now comes the statement that you are really going home and that Lord Reading has been appointed to succeed you. So far as your own peace of mind and comfort go I must congratulate you because I know under what a great strain, with incessant aggravations and worries, you have lived during the past four years: but I feel great personal regret at your leaving, and I have always hoped that you would hold on at Washington until the War was over. You have done so much for the Great Cause, which is ours not less than England's, that I have thought of you as one of the necessary men over here. No doubt your work is understood and duly appreciated in England. Perhaps after the War, if the real peace ensues, which we all pray for, you will return to the

United States as a visitor, and then I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you at our house and of talking over with you many matters which I want to discuss with you. If there is anything that I can do over here, that you may care to have done after you go back, be sure to write me. And if you ever discover which of your statesmen it was who replied to the Kaiser's secret invitation in 1898 that Britain should join a Coalition against the United States, that if the British Fleet moved at all it would be to stand between the American Fleet and the Coalition, please let me know. That seems to me to be one of the critical decisions of modern times, and the statesman who gave it — whether Salisbury or Balfour — deserves the gratitude of English speaking peoples forever. And it ought to be better known in the interest of the great international Anglo-Saxon union.

I hope that you have kept ample material for your Memoirs and that you will amuse yourself by writing them. Be as indiscreet as possible and observe only so much reticence as is needed to keep you out of jail or out of a libel suit. I write as a historian who believes in having the whole truth.

Please express my regards to Lady Spring-Rice and believe me ... Ever sincerely yours

WM. R. THAYER

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, *January* 10, 1918

Judging from the complete state of forgetfulness and vacuity in my head, I must have written you last week and left nothing as a starter for this. Did I tell you that that book reproducing the *Wipers Times* came promptly, that I have looked over and read most of it, am amazed at

the unfailing humor of the soldier journalists and am most grateful to you for sending it? . . .

I hope that Wilson's statement of War Aims pleased you as much as it did me. We may criticize this or that detail, but the great central demand all of us who wish to see Civilization continue and a real enduring peace reached, support. The Message had the immediate purpose of unmasking the Kaiser's peace offer, which is the greatest danger at present, and it seems to have done this, at least on this side of the water. Lloyd George's speech was also perfect. . . .

By the way, have you observed that our Congress has voted to adopt Prohibition throughout the United States, provided the necessary amendment to the Constitution passes the requisite Legislatures of three fourths of the country, within seven years. You must come over soon or we can't drink your health in anything more enlivening than the somewhat muddy water of Cambridge. Isn't it wonderful? How much hypocrisy flourishes, do you think, among the politicians who now make the 'Empty Bottle' their watchword? A few years ago the Protectionists were trying to make us Freetraders hated by declaring that we were heading for the 'Empty Dinner Pail.' . . .

. . . This morning the paper brings the news of the death of Col. Tom Livermore, who has been desperately sick with pneumonia. I have seen a good deal of him during the past ten years and have come to like him very much. He was the manliest of men, very genial, with a young spirit, and a splendid, vigorous, almost young face. I always thought of him as being the ideal *Beau Sabreur*, who in his younger days had taken delight in cavalry charges; and he had a most minute knowledge of our war history and never failed to entertain me when he gossiped about it. He was

only seventy-four, which doesn't seem much now to a youth who will be fifty-nine next week. . . .

To Sir Cecil Spring-Rice

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *Jan.* 15, 1918

DEAR SIR CECIL:

I am truly grateful to you for your letter. The information it gives, simply confirms what had come to me from other quarters. I knew how intimate you were with Hay, and that it was through you, more than any one else, that he had his earliest intimation of the Hunnization of German policy under the Kaiser after 1895. I purposely refrained from quoting several references to you in his letters because I feared that even without your name — you would be detected. During the War this seemed to me an obviously improper risk to make you run. Later, if it is worth while to issue a definitive edition of the biography, I shall supply missing names and some notes, and, if it then seems safe, I shall insert yours. Henry Adams chided me for being too reticent! He would have had me print Curzon's name in full in that passage where Hay refers to his (C's) having deserved well of the (British) State by having caught an American millionairess.

Again let me wish you an interval of lotos eating, and then, renewed, fruitful activity, and good luck always.

To Walter Hines Page

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
February 2d, 1918

DEAR PAGE (I don't add all the initials of your titles because I cannot believe that you, like the kangaroo, drag a long tail behind you):

Your note of January 16th, in regard to His Grace

Cosmo Ebor, has just come. I shall be glad to see him if the opportunity falls my way, and I should like especially to have a man-to-man talk with him. I meet a good many of the travelling 'celebrities' who pass through Boston, but I make no effort to hunt them up. In the case of the Archbishop, I imagine that his time and attention will be monopolized by the dignitaries of his Church. Still, you may be sure that I shall do whatever I can, and I am truly grateful to you for thinking of me.

I was just about to send you a little book, which you won't have time to read, but it gives me pleasure to send it.[1] I wished in it to explode the Superman fallacy, which still does harm by causing persons to argue that because the Germans are Supermen they must be invincible. Your attractive little daughter lunched here the other day and then we met her at dinner at the Paul Frothinghams' who had van Dyke as a guest. She has a very level head and in the good time coming when women run the world and we men are either negligible fossils or angels — I wonder more and more whether any *man* can be an angel — she will be, either Secretary of State or Ambassadress to London. I hear from Arthur often and admire the way he manages the *World's Work*. These Rathom revelations are a scoop indeed. Arthur asks me to write all sorts of things, so many that I should have to have as many hands as Briareus and in every hand a pen, — not to mention a modicum of grey tissue in the cerebral cavity; but I have no eyesight for reading or writing and so I have to decline all such invitations. But I hope to keep enough vision in my remaining eye to see you when you come back after the Victory has been won.

[1] *The Collapse of Superman*, 1918.

To Theodore Roosevelt

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
February 15, 1918

DEAR THEODORE:

Of course no properly regulated hospital will let you read letters, but I write to tell you that we are among the many millions who are personally interested in your condition. The news of your improvement delights us all: only, in case your doctors should forget to do so, let me warn you against hurrying too fast to get well. *Festina lente!* Make haste in Lent, as the old Romans used to say.

After all, there will be villains and fools to fight for some time to come. Still, the heart of the American people is sound, as the following will prove to you. In Cambridge, as you know, we do all we can to entertain the Radio 'boys.' One of them was at a prim lady's the other evening; and the people there took much interest in the profusion of patterns tattooed over his hands and wrists. 'That's nothing,' said he. 'My body's covered with 'em. *I'm sitting on the Kaiser.*'

Let us no longer doubt the loyalty of our 'plain people.'

When they allow you to read, you'll find Charnwood's 'Lincoln' a great book (small in size) and most interesting as an unintentional commentary on this very time.

To Henry Adams

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *February* 18, 1918

DEAR MR. ADAMS:

I learn from 'Who's Who,' which is oftener in my hands than any other of the Holy Books of the East, that you had your eightieth birthday on Saturday. May I send my sincere congratulations and wish that the rejuvenescence, which your friends have rejoiced to observe in your con-

dition the past two or three years, may continue? You yourself must at least wish to live on to see the end of this War and the patchwork peace which will follow it, so that you may be able to give, as no other historian now living could give, a true account of it to the Angels when you take your place on the Celestial Benches. Dante, of course, won't believe you; I can see him look at you incredulously with those eagle eyes of his and say sternly: 'Impossible! I described in my *Inferno* the worst conceivable but what you tell is worse still.'

I should like to hear how you would reply to Dante, and whether you could persuade him; but I am not likely to be there at all, certainly not within earshot, but if at all in one of the lowest seats.

As I think over your printed works, I feel that you ought to take honest satisfaction in them and realize that at least two of them will be read with admiration by élite readers for many years to come. I say *two*, because I suppose that the time is still distant when people will read eight volumes of history so long as the Tempter strews innumerable volumes of novels along the path where average men and women travel. But the 'Mont St. Michel' and 'The Education' will remain outside of the whims of fashion in books. And, your influence as a teacher of History will last as long as any of your pupils live. Did I tell you that Fred Fish, Harvard '75, our most eminent Boston lawyer today, and former President of the Bell Telephone Co., assured me a week or two ago that you were the one Professor at Harvard who had most influenced him? And then there's little Harry Taylor who swears by you, and whose books anyone might be proud to stand as godfather to. My chief personal regret is, that you got tired of teaching callow youths and left Harvard before I entered, so I had no

opportunity to sit under you. Otherwise, I might have learned how to be a Historian. Torrey and Macvane were poor substitutes for you.

I was greatly shocked by Spring-Rice's death for although I had known him personally for only a few years, I felt a real friendship for him and found him sympathetic. I had a letter from him from Ottawa only a little while before he died, but it gave me no hint that he was so near the end. I was hoping after his resignation that he would go back to England to recuperate, and then write his reminiscences. He was the first Anglo-Saxon on the inside, who saw twenty years ago what Germany was plotting; and History will need the intimate account he might have written of his experiences in Washington since July, 1914. He told me some of these the last time I saw him, and they are so incredible, that my blood boils when I remember them.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *February 22d*, 1918

This is the birthday of the Father of my Country, so he must be a half-Father of yours. But I see this is going to involve me in vulgar fractions, which I didn't expect, and so I stop. Let us thank God, however, that America — and the world — can look up to George Washington as its Founder. Last night at the Thursday Evening Club Paul Frothingham contrasted Washington and Lincoln, our patterns, with Frederick the Great and Bismarck, the German heroes. We don't need to do more than contrast the names in order to show the difference between the two nations of today.

Your letter to both of us came yesterday, after being twenty-one days on the way. Don't write, unless you

really have time and compelling inclination. Writing is for those who have nothing to do or can do little or nothing, and, like me, have to keep their minds and interests alive in this way.

Speaking of interest, are you perpetually beset by the persons, usually female, who pantingly ask you your opinion about the political situation in Tobolsk, or possible disaffection at Singapore, or the progress of the anti-polygamy agitation in Celebes? I am. Of course, I am expected to have an opinion about everything nearer home, including the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike in Schenectady, the flaws in President Wilson's rhetoric, Secretary Baker's injustice to the 19th Regiment of Killarney Dragoons, the proper size of Red Cross surgical bandages, the probability that our neighbor Mrs. X is a German spy, and nineteen special puzzles in the Income Tax Returns. Self-preservation being our strongest instinct, I feel justified in falling back on that and in declining to have opinion on almost everything, except half a dozen really essential matters. I don't even pretend to waste my cerebral juice in speculating about Russia. I discounted the effect of her miserable slump six months ago, and now I am only troubled by my inability to find an adjective sufficiently vivid to express the scorn, disgust and abomination I feel for the action of her Bolsheviki. To call them condign jelly-fishes, isn't strong enough. I have waited twenty years for an opportunity to use the word *condign*, which has a vaguely horrible suggestion about it, but now it seems pale, flaccid and insufficient. However, perhaps you know what I mean.

Betty, as Margaret says, delights in imbibing all the gloom she can find in the newspapers. I, on the contrary, am a Professional Optimist, so that it doesn't trouble me

to hear that the Germans are advancing on Pinsk, having occupied Dvinsk, and expecting tomorrow night to reach Minsk. Those promenades will only help wear out the shoe-leather of the Boches soldiers. The War won't end at any of those places or even at High Jinsk. As I argue, the War will only end militarily on the Western Front; therefore, until the Huns wipe out the British, French and Americans in Flanders and France, it makes no difference what they do elsewhere. Indeed, the farther into Siberia they go, the better, and if they could be lured to send an expedition into Borneo, better still. I assume, of course, that the line holds in Italy against them, because the English and French now see, what the Italians urged in vain for nearly two years, that the Italian front is an integral and most important section of the Allied Front. . . .

What we need here is to scare Wilson and everybody connected with the War preparations into hurrying up. I wish I had a pitchfork as long and sharp as that with which one old Florentine in Dante's Inferno prodded his neighbor. We are slow, wofully slow, but we are coming. . . .

. . . The Archbishop of York is coming. Walter Page wrote me and asked me 'to be good to him,' that he is really a very companionable person although he signs himself 'Cosmo Ebor.' I wonder what I could do to be 'good' to him. An Archbishop is as much out of my line as a chambered nautilus would be. How should you be good to that? Fortunately the Tavern Club is going to give him a dinner, and I am on the list of notables who are inviting him to a reception at Symphony Hall, so my problem is solved. . . .

The Radio 'boys' continue to enliven our academic circles. Two were invited to dine at the —— ——. Only one came. 'I thought there were to be two of you,'

said Mrs. ——. 'There were,' said the Radiote; 'but we drew lots to see which should come — and I was stung.' As you live in that ancient University town, where wells of English undefiled *pullule*, you can't have heard this Yankee slang. Come over and find out what it means.

Early in March, 1918, it was announced in the newspapers that Theodore Roosevelt had, several years before, while in the White House, lost the sight of one eye, the result of a blow received while boxing. This information prompted the following letter.

To Theodore Roosevelt

CAMBRIDGE, MASSTTS: *March* 9, 1918

DEAR SIR:

I have the honor to inform you that you have been elected a Life Member of the

Polyphemus Club.

The only point raised against your election was that you can see more with one eye than other men can with two: but this was ruled out because number and not quality is the test.

Among past Presidents of this ancient Society were Horatius Cocles and Horatio Nelson.

Respectfully yours

WM. R. THAYER
Secretary Pro Tempore

To the
HON. THEODORE ROOSEVELT

To E. Sohier Welch

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *March* 15, 1918

DEAR CAPTAIN:

... The visit of the Archbishop of York to Boston has proved to be a remarkable event. He was the best sort of Britisher to come to this country with a message of friendliness and kinship from old England. I had the good luck to meet him several times and have never seen anyone else quite like him. He was the least angular of high ecclesiastics and the least haughty of English University men; a delightful talker, urbane in manner and speech, benign and dignified. That he was serious, and even grave also was not surprising, for under the great burden and emotions of the War his black hair has turned white and grown thin, and although he is only a little over fifty, he looks nearer seventy-five; but his face is still young and so is his talk.

The dinner we gave him at the Tavern Club was one of the best I ever attended there, or anywhere else. He spoke with much emotion. Bishop Lawrence, who brought him was, as he always is, straightforward, matter-of-fact, practical, honest, and those qualities are an excellent substitute for eloquence. President Lowell, a very uneven speaker, never did better; and Dean Hodges gave an excellently balanced grave-and-gay speech, in which he reminded His Grace that the founders of this Commonwealth, and their descendants for many generations, would have been horrified at the thought that a Prelate should be here at all....

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, *March* 28, 1918

...I am reading with great disappointment Morley's Recollections. Don't tell him so if you happen to take tea

at Wimbledon Park, but do tell him, that you know a young 'prentice biographer in the States who wrote a Life of Cavour and who greatly regrets that His Lordship didn't carry out his intention of writing one too. The contrast between the Morley portrait and the Thayer portrait would have been great. I don't refer, of course, to the evident difference in the power of the two authors — and it would have been most interesting because it would have illustrated two very different methods in writing biography. . . .

To Theodore Roosevelt

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *April* 3, 1918

DEAR THEODORE:

Wednesday, May 1, next, will be the Seventieth Birthday of Mr. James Ford Rhodes, and it is proposed by some of his friends to give him a dinner at the Somerset Club, Boston, at 7.30 on that evening. You are cordially invited to subscribe to this dinner, and we hope you can be present.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *April* 4, 1918

. . . Two of my Key nieces have been here. One of them — Edith Haines — lives at Winnetka near Chicago, and is president of a ladies' committee to entertain Radio Boys from the Great Lakes camp. She is nearer 40 than thirty but petite, and very vivacious. After one dance, a Radio asked to be allowed to escort her home. 'You'll be as safe with me,' he said, 'as you would be in God's pocket.' . . .

To Charles F. Thwing

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
April 15, 1918

. . . I hope you feel as I do, that this War is drawing to a close. Perhaps this present slaughter in Picardy and Flanders is the final Golgotha. Looking at all the elements, so far as we can know them, I do not believe that the Huns can win. If they are checked during the next month or two, they are beaten; and if they are beaten, their maniac people at home will discover it before Christmas.

But we — Government and individuals alike — must work with greater and greater energy until the victory comes, is acknowledged throughout the world, and irremovably sealed. In my Jack Horner way I keep on issuing propaganda — firing arrows into the air at night — and quite ignorant of their effect. But this is all that is possible to me now. I hate controversy, and yet during the last three years it has seemed a duty for me to prosecute it with all my strength, and so I have got the reputation among persons who know only this side, of being a wrangler.

My dream, on the contrary, is to have a year or two after polemics are over, to write some lectures on Biography, and, still more, to spend much time in reading. That dream is based, of course, on the premise that I still have a makeshift for one eye.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, *May* 4, 1918

. . . The week for me has been busy because on Wednesday evening there was a dinner at the Somerset Club for Mr. Rhodes on his 70th birthday. Thirty of his friends attended and as many more would have come if they could.

Being Chairman of the Committee of Arrangements, I had to see to it that the good man was not drowned in a flood of laudatory syrup. This I succeeded in by the simple device of not telling anyone beforehand that I should call him up. The consequence was, that we had a dozen or more spontaneous, sincere and delightful talks or personal reminiscences from his intimates. I gave warning that no eulogy would be tolerated. I tried to make Mr. Rhodes believe that old age is an illusion and that seventy years mark only the beginning of new youth. But I suspect that if seventy is at all like sixty, no one can be beguiled into dreaming that a real rejuvenation is going to come. If it did, it might be as inconvenient, not to say as painful, as is the third growth of teeth which sometimes afflicts the very old. But he has everything to make his prospect bright — not only material prosperity, but honor, love, obedience, troops of friends, and a promising cluster of grandchildren. . . .

After this excitement came Roosevelt. Yesterday morning Mr. Rhodes gave him a breakfast, to which he invited several of us and we had much interesting talk. T. R. is the most unfailing intellectual dynamo with which I ever came in contact, and I always enjoy the humor which flashes from him in intimate conversation, but rarely gets into his public speeches. We talked about the danger of the peace drive which we all see to be coming, and we agreed that we must do everything we possibly could to prepare public opinion to reject it; only in this way can we safeguard this country and the world against a premature and delusive peace, which Wilson might consent to unless he had proof that American public opinion is opposed. Those who know him best assert that he does nothing unless he thinks that public opinion demands or approves it. . . .

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, *May* 15, 1918

. . . Over here there is really a much better condition and outlook than we have had before. We know the worst, which is the first step toward reaching the best. Troops in great numbers, large stores of food and of munitions have been going over to your side, ever since Wilson realized the peril in which the great drive put the English and French. Half a million of our men are in France today — not all first-line fighters, of course, but all eager, and certain to be fit for battle much sooner there than here. Jack Hallowell, who is one of Hoover's aides, told me of the vast quantity of beef that has been shipped to you recently, so that I hope that you have been able to procure not less than a good tip of the sirloin for your share. Eliot Wadsworth, the head of the American Red Cross, has just come home from a tour of inspection in Italy, France and England, and he told me much about the work that has been done and is doing, of the persons he had seen, the opinions he had heard, and of his general impressions. I judge that he found Clemenceau the quickest man to do business with. . . .

To H. Nelson Gay

CAMBRIDGE, *May* 18, 1918

. . . When I picture to myself what England has done since August 1, 1914, I bow my head in astonishment and gratitude. It is thanks to her that I and every other American has been safe, undevastated, and untyrannized over by the Boches during the past four years. France would have been crushed, and Italy too, before Thanksgiving, 1914, if the English had not come in; and you all

would have been starved long ago by German sea-raiders and submarines, if Britannia had not kept the sea open to traffic. Measuring results by the resources at her command, I think England's achievement has been more astonishing than that of Germany. And it is because England is in this war and has never ended any great Continental war in which she took part until she was victorious, that I bank on victory now. She beat Spain at the end of the 16th Century, she beat Louis XIV and his Coalition at the beginning of the 18th Century, and she fought Napoleon for twenty years before she finally destroyed him at Waterloo. If ever a nation had a right to use *Tenax propositi* for its motto, England has. . . .

On May first we gave Mr. Rhodes a dinner at the Somerset Club to commemorate his seventieth birthday, and we had a delightful, informal evening. On the third, he invited a few of us to breakfast with him to meet Roosevelt. There we had a very stirring discussion on the international situation. T. R. and President Lowell talked most and we all agreed that we must do everything that we can to educate American public opinion against accepting a German peace. The chief danger lies with Wilson, and as he is wholly governed by what he regards as public opinion, we propose to control his decision by creating an anti-peace public opinion.

To Charles F. Thwing

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *May* 25, 1918

That was a fine letter you wrote last time and I intended to thank you for it sooner. But old Chronos devours not only his children and their works but even such minutiæ as my wishes and good intentions. I think you misunderstood my flying remark about Biography. What I meant

was, that among the things which I look forward to doing after the War, is to writing a series of lectures on Biography as an art, from the days when our mythical Moses wrote the life of Joseph down to our own, when Charnwood gives us the best biography which I have read, of Lincoln. Pretty much every other topic has been lectured about and written about by the thousand titles. But Biography has been neglected. Our Universities, with what seems to me to be fatuous academic pettifogging, slice history or literature into a dozen or twenty courses each, but no College, so far as I know, has ever had a course on Biography, whether as an indispensable element of history or as a form of literature. To outline its development has long been one of my dreams. This, as you see, is very different from attempting to imitate Plutarch or Vasari. . . .

I tell you privately that I expect the War will be over by Thanksgiving. Keep this prophecy dark, and don't injure my reputation as a historian by letting people know that I am in the same class with Mother Shipton, Zadkiel and the Farmers' Almanac.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, *May* 30, 1918

The Huns are busy with their third drive; they have taken Soissons, and are headed for Rheims, so that they will probably complete their record as cathedral destroyers (Amiens being already within easy gun-fire for them). I feel confident of the outcome, and before this letter reaches you the last offensive of the Kaiser may have been checked and broken. But, as in the case of a surgical operation, one can't help feeling anxious until it's over.

Meanwhile, the news here is the best we've had. Our

troops are going over in large numbers without interruption. At this moment there are half a million on the other side. More wonderful still, there is good reason to believe that our air-planes have started, and so with other munitions and supplies. But we must wait, before we can tell just how our soldiers acquit themselves in modern fighting. Grant's best regiments, or Lee's, wouldn't last long if they kept to their old methods against the new. . . .

. . . This is Memorial Day, and we are going down to Sanders Theatre to hear Lieut. Morize, the French officer who has charge of our R.O.T.C now, give the address. Doesn't that mere statement make you rub your eyes? Doesn't it typify the startling paradoxes among which we now live? Five years ago no one would have dreamt of it. Do you suppose that ten years from now some Papuan Chief will succeed Lowell as President of Harvard College? . . .

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, *June* 8, 1918

This is Saturday and the best part of my writing day is gone, but I can't let the week pass without sending you a few lines. My delay is caused by what I very modestly call 'War-work.' That is, I have been writing a propaganda tract which I hope the *Sat. Eve. Post* will print. That is the most that a derelict like me can do. But how I envy the able-bodied men who can train a machine-gun on the Boches, or drive an ambulance, or pilot an airplane!

We had a delightful visit on the Carroll Dunhams at Irvington. One day we motored up to West Point, which is the most imposing place, except Mt. Vernon, I have seen in America. Its view is almost unsurpassed, and its buildings, especially the new ones, including the Chapel

by Ralph Cram, would honor any country. And then there is the Hudson which outranks the Rhine and the Danube, and even the Nile, among the rivers I know. The foliage this year is everywhere superb. . . .

Goodbye — Don't forget that we are one week nearer the end of the War, and that it is coming out right.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, *June* 15, 1918

Here is Saturday and my letter to you hasn't gone. I expected to write it yesterday, but Arthur Page — the Ambassador's son — came in from New York and I had two hours' talk with him. I wish you could have heard it because it was much more interesting than anything I can write. He always brings me more than anyone else about the situation in New York and Washington. And as it is usually inside information, I have temporarily the feeling, not exactly of Æsop's fly on the hub of the chariot wheel, but of being in some unexplained way, a part of this vast machine which has begun really to speed up. Arthur is very shrewd and he has a compact and often humorous way of expressing himself. He disagrees with me, and thinks the War won't end before the Autumn of 1919. But we agreed in believing that the Allies must do something, and that very quickly, to brace up Russia and to prevent the complete Germanization of that Land of Chaos. He talked a good deal about Wilson — everybody does. . . .

Even in tragic times like these humorous gleams manage to show themselves. What could be funnier than this? In those good old days, when the Kaiser wished to appear a great yachtsman — as great as any American or Britisher, he offered a gold cup for the winner of a race. The winner of this Kaiser's Cup was an American, who gave it to his

Yacht Club, to keep among the trophies. Lately it was decided to melt the Cup down to bullion and contribute the amount to the Red Cross Fund. Tradition had it that the Cup had cost $5000. On being put into the melting pot, the Cup yielded $40 worth of gold plating, and the rest was pewter. How is that for funny?

I am thinking of writing a little sketch, a pen portrait as lifelike as possible, to be called 'The Pewter Napoleon.'[1] Have you any intimate touches to complete the portrait? If you have, send them at once. . .

To Poultney Bigelow

MAGNOLIA, MASS., *July* 3, 1918

DEAR BIGELOW:

On going to our Cambridge house I found the copy of 'Genseric' with your inscription on the fly-leaf. Many thanks. It's always a satisfaction to me to think that over there on the banks of the Hudson there is one virile heart thumping away with ten times more vigor than mine has to destroy the Boches. I haven't read 'Genseric' yet, for I am still very short on eye-sight, but I have glanced over it and am sure that I shall be well content when I can read it, or have it read to me.

You've done just what needed to be done. You have dissected the Ancient Hun and have shown the identity between him and the actual Prussian. I feel pretty sure too that you have filled the book with characteristic phrases and thrusts which I shall chuckle over.

My own work since I last wrote you has been of the *faute de mieux* kind: two or three Philippics in the *Satur-*

[1] Printed under the title 'Prussia's Pewter Prince' in the Boston *Evening Transcript*, October 19, 1918; republished in *Volleys from a Non-Combatant* (1919).

day Evening Post, which I have come to prize on account of its wide circulation, a few stray articles here and there and several talks, chiefly on Italy. . . .

To Theodore Roosevelt

MAGNOLIA, MASS., *July* 18, 1918

DEAR THEODORE:

I grieve with you and envy you. For I can't help thinking that, if Quentin had an instant's consciousness before he died, he must have felt infinite satisfaction in knowing that he was fulfilling his life in the way which you and his mother would approve. Bless you both.

We saw a little of Quentin when he was a Freshman and we found him a fine manly boy.[1]

Faithfully yours

WM. R. THAYER

To Mrs. Michael Foster

MAGNOLIA, MASS., *July* 20, 1918

. . . Yesterday was the first glorious day we have had since the War began. At noon, we got news of the way in which the French and Americans were driving the Boches before them; and the night papers confirmed it all. In Boston, according to reports, there was tremendous enthusiasm. In the little North Shore towns bells were rung and flags displayed. I thought how you must be rejoicing, and how even the pessimistic and despairing must at last have felt a spasm of cheer. I felt as if a tight, strangling rope had been loosened round my heart, and, if I had let myself go, I should have boohooed for pure relief. How you all, who have had not only the strain but the danger, must have throbbed!

[1] Quentin Roosevelt was killed in an air battle near Chambray, France, on July 14, 1918.

I believe that this is the beginning of the end — though that end must be several months away.

There was a report that Weasel, the Crown Prince, had been captured. Never fear! None of the Hohenzollern brood will be near enough to the firing line for that; but if, by any accident, he should be caught, have him caged in one of the Allied hospitals in Flanders — and don't let the Boches know which one. Or send him over here for safe-keeping....

To Mrs. J. D. Cameron

MAGNOLIA, MASS^TTS: *August* 18, 1918

MY DEAR MRS. CAMERON:

I venture to send you an article on Henry Adams's novels,[1] which may contain some points you have not heard. I suspect, however, that you, like other intimate friends of his, attributed 'Democracy' to him. Miss Tone tells me that she saw a copy of 'Esther' in your library in Paris, so that you probably were in that secret too.

His 'Education' is to be published next month, and I feel sure that it will establish H. A.'s fame with the public. As I remark in this sketch, I regard him as the chief figure in American literature from 1880 on.

You doubtless heard the details of his death — how he had been in fairly good health, how he went to bed after a good day, and died in his sleep. I had a letter from him only a week before, written with his old-time playful irony.

Spring-Rice's death, a little earlier, was a decided shock and a visible loss. He had still, according to all probability,

[1] An article by Thayer, published in the Boston *Evening Transcript*, August 10, 1918.

a dozen or more years of active life ahead of him. He, too, like H. A., died suddenly and quietly an hour after he went to bed. Unfortunately, I knew him only during the past few years, but I was greatly drawn to him, and found him the most easy of access of any Englishman I have met.

I hoped, after his retirement, he would write his memoirs, which would have been most important, because he was behind the scenes in many diplomatic affairs of unusual moment. He is referred to in my Life of Hay several times, but not named, because it would have been indiscreet to give his name while he was still Ambassador. It was from him, twenty years ago, that Hay first had intimations of German schemes of world power.

Mrs. Thayer and I have just come back from visiting Charles and Fanny MacVeagh at Monadnock. I learned from them that you have recently lost your daughter. May I offer you my deep sympathy? She died for France, as the men and women of France have been dying for all the world. If she could only have lived to see the day of victory and reward which is now dawning!

To Henry Cabot Lodge

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *Oct.* 11, 1918

DEAR SENATOR LODGE:

Thank you for sending me your speech of ten days ago. It gives me a feeling of considerable security to know you are there, and have the courage to speak out. I say 'considerable' because I never feel sure that the President may not fly in the face of all wisdom and logic and even, as it seems to me, of all patriotism.

Certainly, he must now be restrained from taking pen in

hand, to conduct an epistolary game of battledore and shuttlecock as he did after the *Lusitania* sinking. A man who is foolish enough to undertake wittingly controversy with William, the Liar, reminds me of a fly who starts off jauntily to walk across a sheet of sticky fly-paper. (As I try to visualize the President in this act, he doesn't cut a dignified figure.) — At this point yesterday I was interrupted. Meanwhile I have had read to me your speech of Thursday, and if I say that it is the best of yours I have ever seen, and that I should not know where to suggest an improvement, you will understand how highly I esteem it. I was particularly struck by the fine vein of patriotic deference towards the President *as* President — something almost chivalrous — which ran through it. Sarcasm would have been so much easier. I hope that I may have a reprint of this, too.

I was surprised yesterday afternoon, in talking with a man just from Washington, someone high up in the Red Cross there, to learn that everyone in Washington assumed that the withdrawal by the Germans from all occupied territory, meant that they would *disarm* also. I don't see how such an interpretation can be put on the President's reply, and if it be the correct one, I don't believe for a moment, that the Germans would accept it. They are trying a great dodge to gain time and breath, and opportunity to reform and solidify their battered divisions. If they consent to go back beyond their own frontier they will hardly include laying down arms also. They may retire in order that the Kaiser may be able to say to the German people that his armies have not been *beaten back*, and have never allowed the enemy to tread on the sacred soil of the Fatherland.

If the occasion serves, I hope you will show up in more

detail the utter falseness of the Kaiser's pretended democratization of the Government. Scheidemann, the Socialist leader, admitted to the Cabinet, is generally believed to have been in the pay of the Kaiser from the start; the President of the Reichstag solemnly declaring (at the Kaiser's bidding) that the Reichstag represents the country, and the country wants peace; the somewhat absurd Prince Maximilian, whose 'Liberal' desires are so loudly trumpeted by the Potsdam King — fine exponents of Democracy these are, aren't they?

I can't help suspecting that Lloyd George and Clemenceau, to whom the draft of the Message must have been submitted before Wilson published it, would not have approved of it unless they saw more in it than I do. I don't believe that Foch will stop hammering until he has the Boches beaten, and we must do everything we can to prevent the suggestion that he will stop, from being accepted as probable.

Mr. Ford told me that you approved of inviting Lord Charnwood to the November meeting of the Massachusetts Historical Society, but I fear that he won't accept, because he has to be at Yale that evening. He ought to be one of our Corresponding Members but when his name was suggested last year, someone reported that Robert Lincoln had sneered at the Biography, because Charnwood had repeated one of old 'Billy' Herndon's stories of Lincoln. Personally, I believe Herndon's stories, and it seems to me ridiculous, if not snobbish, to attempt to hush them up, for the purpose of making posterity believe that Abraham Lincoln was made of rosewood or mahogany, and not of tough and gnarled hickory.

Excuse this over-long letter and thank you for the great speech.

To Theodore Roosevelt

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
October 14, 1918

DEAR THEODORE:

Billy Endicott, '87, who is now running most of our American Red Cross in London, recently made a trip through the French War Zone. In a letter from him today, which I enclose, there is a paragraph which I know will interest you and your wife. Please return it to me.

I was cheered to read your bugle blast from the West the other day. Beveridge writes me this morning that he has just come back from a campaign in Indiana, a State which, apparently, puts our effete East to shame for patriotism. How I envy you strong men who can go out wherever you will, and tackle the masses. I have to sit here like a hermit thrush and peep my little refrain and wonder whether anyone listens to it. The October *North American Review* printed my last peep.[1] I sent another to the *Metropolitan Magazine* which kept it a fortnight, altho it was perishable, that is, 'timely' stuff, and now they return it finding it 'most interesting to read' but regretting that they can't use it. Napoleon made a mistake, he should have shot an editor instead of a book-seller. I rather had a sentimental hankering to appear in the same Magazine with you but the *Metropolitan* people thought otherwise.

I believe that we must keep up our demand for 'Unconditional Surrender' day and night, until we get it.

The 'damnable iteration' of the phrase will gradually sink into many minds until the thing is taken as a matter of course. . . .

[1] *A Judas Peace.*

To Henry Cabot Lodge

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *October* 16, 1918

MY DEAR SENATOR LODGE:

Thank you for your letter just received. Do not on any account think that you ought to reply. You are too busy.

'Bleat about virtue being preferable to vice,' is good. I wish we could find some sort of bulldog glue that would hold the bleater firm from one day to another. He must have seen, however, that the country is unqualifiedly for unconditional surrender, and we must keep that watchword going until we get the thing itself.

Wilson's second Message ran to about a thousand words. He passes for the great Epistolary Prodigy of the country. Turning to my copy of Grant's Memoirs, I find that he put what we want in eleven words, viz: 'No terms except an unconditional and immediate surrender can be accepted.' I prefer U. S. Grant, or even A. Lincoln to W. Wilson as a letter writer.

Wouldn't it be a good move for the U.S., and the Allies too, to inform Germany that for every month during which she now prolongs the War, an additional five percent will be charged in the final bill of indemnity?

Everybody in these parts regards you as the great Defender of our Cause in this crisis. I rejoice that you speak from a tribune which commands a nation-wide audience. My little propaganda poem on Foch seems to appeal to many readers here. Some of them urge me to reprint it and circulate it throughout the country. . . . I think I believe a great deal more of Billy Herndon's yarns than you do. The attempt to expurgate or prettify Lincoln's youth has never appealed to me. . . .

So with Lincoln's uncouth, squalid, hampered, vulgar, and even coarse early life, without any of the opportunities

which we imagine are indispensable to the development of a great man, or an ordinary one; I would have no 'wart' left out. Nothing that I have ever read about him detracts from his essential nobleness, though much makes me all the more amazed at his subsequent achievement. I find the 'rampant and spontaneous' Billy, — as Lincoln called him, — very garrulous and very indiscreet but I feel that he always meant to tell the truth.

Oh! that we had Lincoln in the White House now.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *Oct.* 16, 1918

. . . Your wonderful letter about your work at Southampton Dock, reached us Monday. We all rejoiced in it, and we all said, how splendid it is that the poor wounded Yanks have you to meet them there. I wish you had a hundred hands to shake with them all. That's the sort of work which I envy you being able to do; but even if I had health and strength I shouldn't be *you*, and it is precisely *you* who make those meetings what they are.

. . . We have had a week of trepidation owing to the President's attack of letter-writing. Epistolitis is a form of periodic mania which seems to be incurable. It affords its victim great satisfaction. As he drives the pen, or clicks the typewriter, he enjoys the illusion that he is the greatest person in the universe, not excepting the paranoiac William II. But his pleasure is bought at the risk of great danger to the country and to Civilization. For several days the people of this nation held their breath. Knowing however that one symptom of Wilson's disease is, that he always wishes to echo the opinion of the majority, thousands of Americans bombarded him with telegrams insisting that he should demand nothing short of unconditional sur-

render. The result was his second message, which was a great deal better than his first, but still left loopholes for interminable discussion, which I suppose the Boches will be cunning enough to penetrate.

Wilson's see-sawing reminds me of a quatrain by a neglected poet in Minnesota, whom Dr. Crothers once quoted to us:

> 'It is said of certain stars,
> And especially of Mars,
> That they wobble from their track —
> But they always wobble back.'

The devil of it is with W. W. that each time we have a new suspense, because we are not sure that this time he *will* 'wobble back.'

The verses I sent you by the unworthy laureate of Berkeley St. were inspired, I fear, not by the divine afflatus, but by red-hot indignation and by the sense of how much is at stake.[1] . . .

To Mrs. J. D. Cameron

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *October* 22, 1918

MY DEAR MRS. CAMERON:

Your letter of September 18th came ten days ago. . . . What you told me about Mr. Adams interested me greatly. I came to know him only during the last five years of his life and was much fascinated by his remarkable personality. I won't say that he liked me, but at least he tolerated me, and was most friendly, and gave me all possible help on the Biography; and when it was finished he seemed almost startled by the description I gave of him and his circle. I judged that he approved.

As to writing his Biography, I have not been asked and,

[1] 'Let Foch Decide!' *Boston Herald*, October 14, 1918.

of course, I would never suggest it to the family. I suspect that any biography of him would pale before his Autobiography in the 'Education,' which has just been published and is already attracting attention. It hasn't yet achieved the *succès de scandale* which his brother Charles's Autobiography aroused. But Henry was infinitely more subtle and profound than Charles, and it will take the great, blundering, mutton-headed world, against which he railed so playfully, a good while to understand him. I am enclosing the only important article which has as yet been printed since the 'Education' appeared.[1] It is by Henry O. Taylor, Harvard '78, who was one of H. A.'s pupils during the last year of his teaching here. Taylor has remained a life-long friend and admirer. He is himself a writer of distinction, and not only that somewhat doubtful creature — 'a great scholar' — but a man of wit and liveliness. I don't send the *Atlantic Monthly* entire, because we are told that the P. O. doesn't wish us to load the east-bound steamers.

How perspicacious you are! The vein of poetry in H. A. may have been slender, but it was genuine, and he had real accomplishment in verse, as the poems in 'Esther' and the sheaf which you send me, certainly prove.

I have asked young Charlie Adams, who has been a friend of mine since he was in College thirty or more years ago, whether they may not be published in a magazine. I understand that he has full jurisdiction over his uncle's affairs. . . . If I should ever have the great pleasure of seeing you and of looking over your correspondence, I think I should venture to ask you whether I might not edit a little book, or large as the case might be, entitled 'Three

[1] Article by Henry Osborn Taylor on 'The Education of Henry Adams,' *Atlantic Monthly*, October, 1918.

Friends,' and consisting of your letters from Hay, Spring-Rice and Henry Adams. Of course we should have to get permission from their legal representatives to publish their letters. They were all men whom I should write of with real sympathy and if it were not that I am told that Lady Spring-Rice is preparing a biography of him, I should make a brief study of him even now. I shall always regret that I did not see your letters from John Hay before I published his Life. The book has been astonishingly successful — some 30,000 copies sold in three years, I believe — and if I live five or six years more, it may be advisable to bring out another definitive edition, putting in the full names where I was forced to use initials, and adding various matters which discretion then compelled me to omit. If this definitive edition should ever come out I should ask you to let me have your Hay material.

You doubtless know about the memorial to Spring-Rice, to which this clipping from last night's paper refers. I am glad it has been done, although I feel that the British Government ought not to leave the widow and children of such a man dependent. I also enclose two recent bits of propaganda of my own. For a long time past, I have devoted all my working power to fighting the Boches with my paper bullets. Here we are with the end of the War in sight, if the perilous Epistolarian of the White House will only keep quiet. We are all a-tremble lest he lose by the pen what Foch has led the Allies to win by the sword.

Miss Tone has gone to France for war-work, and you will doubtless see her there.

Faithfully yours

Wm. R. Thayer

P.S. In the presence of your great losses, I can only ex-

press my deepest sympathy. Ever since I was a little boy the sight of persons in great pain or sorrow has smitten me with a sense of guilt — as if I ought not to be in a world where such things can happen. But I know now that it is a part of nature, and that those who have greatly loved can greatly bear. You ought at least to take comfort in remembering how much you were to your dear ones. — Excuse my intrusion.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
Nov. 7, 1918, 5 P.M.

DEAREST MARGIE:

P E A C E ! !

OUR Peace

I was in town at noon and had heard the rumor two hours earlier, but at 12.30 the *Record* came out with a headline as big as your old Pineapple Green's back and full confirmation that the Boches had not only sued for terms to Foch, but had accepted and signed them. Glorious Foch! Glorious England and France! and all the dead who gave their lives to this end!

I nearly boohooed in the street, but managed to hold in pretty well till I got home.

I rejoiced for you! What a relief you must feel at this very moment! I am just sending you a cablegram from Bess.[1]

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, *Nov. 11th*, 1918

How the comic and the tragic turn handsprings together at this time! Unless you heard that last Thursday

[1] Mrs. Thayer sent Mrs. Foster a cablegram reading 'Thank God.'

we were hoaxed by the fake peace-news, and that the whole country celebrated, you must have wondered at Betty's ejaculatory cablegram. If you surmised that she had been suddenly seized with religious mania, you would have been excused.

Today the true news has come. There is no danger of change or revision. The Hun has signed an unconditional surrender. It's now five in the afternoon by your time, and I suppose you're used to it. But I am not, although our whistles began shrieking at four this morning, and then the bells rang, and ragamuffins have been marching through Berkeley Street with a drum and a banner and much noise. And the Radio boys have been marching triumphantly through Harvard Square, and Tabby and Priscilla Thorp and other riotous young women have been having a champagne-breakfast with Sumner Appleton at the Union Club.

I feel as if I were standing on the brink of the Everlasting Pit, and were seeing Moloch, and Baal and Thor and Kultur and the Devil, and the Kaiser, and Prince Weasel, and all the rest, being thrown down into it — let us hope forever — ; and I hear the whimper of the Pewter Monarch and the whines of alarm of his miserable progeny, and above all, the hissing of Hell and the groans and cries, there is a wonderful voice, as of a Seraph, which says in tones not to be denied or doubted: 'The judgments of the Lord are righteous altogether.'

Dear Margaret, we have lived through, thank God for that. Let us be thankful, be humble, and let us be grateful to Bert and the others, whose lives were needed to bring about this end.

Plan to come over soon and see us, while some of us at least have eyes to see with.

To Poultney Bigelow

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *Nov.* 11, 1918

Two letters from you came on the same morning, and I return double-barreled thanks. My head is reeling this morning with the Peace news. No fake this time! Your old playmate, William the Pewter, has run away to Holland. How convenient these little free States are for dispossessed despots, hurrying off to save their skins! His Grandpapa took refuge in despised England in '48, and so did even Metternich. I asked for a newspaper this morning with a snapshot of William making a dash for safety, with his shirt-tail far streaming, and the boar's tusk mustaches still encased by that Schnurrbart machine which the Huns have used for many years past; but even our enterprising newspapers haven't reached that pitch of modernity.

Of course the first thought is one of relief that the great strain is over and that there will be no more killed in battle to put down the abominable Hun. Then I think of some of the fellows who have been killed whom I knew, and whose parents are my friends, and all sorts of other thoughts come surging in. One point, however, is evident: we mustn't relax for a moment until the Peace is signed, which shall bring back justice into the world and give Democracy its proper scope. . . .

To Major George Haven Putnam

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *Nov.* 12, 1918

DEAR MR. PUTNAM:

I am very sorry to hear that you are in the Hospital. That is probably the best place to be in if you want to be repaired quickly, and I hope soon to hear that you have been evacuated, well.

I haven't yet digested the truce sufficiently to write

about it. The fact that it really means Germany's unconditional surrender, is amazing. The miserable, cowardly, slinking away of the Kaiser is most characteristic of the head of the greatest braggers the world has ever seen. It is just what one would have, because he quits without any final gleam of honor, or nobility, or courage.

You ought to take great satisfaction in looking over your own course during the last four years. For a long time, as I recall, yours was almost the only voice in New York which spoke out, both against the infamies of the Boches at home and abroad, and the ignominy in which our Government mired us by warning us to observe neutrality. What you did after the American Rights League started, the public knows, and must be now very grateful for. Your League, and ours here, superinduced an irritation which, I think, had its effect in forcing Wilson to go into the War.

Please give my best regards to Mrs. Putnam. I hear that your wonderful daughter has just gone to France again. Ah! *Les jeunes!* But youth is not enough, one must have her spirit added to it. . . .

To Charles F. Thwing

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *Nov.* 15, 1918

We are delighted to know that you are to be here so soon. Plan to dine or lunch with us, if it can be arranged.

The War is over, but what a tremendous responsibility is placed on the winners! We have to determine not only the territorial and political details, but to take care to hand on, undiminished and unpolluted, the ideals of Justice, and Truth, and Liberty, which we have inherited. In other words, the very essence of Civilization is in our keeping, and the mawkish sentimentalists, who send bouquets to

murderers in prison, and beg us not to do anything to make the Germans feel bitter, are doing and will do all they can to seduce us from our solemn duty.

How long it seems since August, 1914! I kept up my belief that the right would prevail, although there were many times when it would have been easy to join the doubters and the despairers. Happily, perhaps, I did not know the worst. But I have been buoyed up throughout by the conviction that if the Devil should win, this earth would not be a proper habitation for decent men.

Such is the record of Thayer's correspondence during the closing, crowning year of the war. There are a few other letters written during that year which are of interest to the student of American literary history which ought to be published. They are addressed to Henry Holt and concern Henry Adams. Thayer had, as we have seen, become interested in Henry Adams in connection with the writing of *The Life and Letters of John Hay*. He had established by internal criticism that Adams was the author of *Democracy*, a matter which had been shrouded in mystery by Mr. Adams himself and by his immediate circle. Mr. Henry Holt in his *Garrulities af an Octogenarian* (pp. 136–137) has this to say about this subject:

'In the spring of '79 Henry sent me the manuscript of *Democracy*, under a pledge of dead secrecy. I read it myself and accepted it at once. The secret inevitably got out to one or two men in my office, but it never got farther until Thayer told it in his biography of Hay.'[1]

During the last five years of Mr. Adams's life he and

[1] For Thayer's opinion see *Life and Letters of John Hay*, Vol. II, 58–59 and 75 note; also letters to Henry Holt, April 18, 1915, printed above, p. 248, and to Henry Adams, July 17, 1915.

Thayer were close friends. After Adams's death Thayer wrote a criticism or appreciation of his novels which was published in the Boston *Evening Transcript*.[1]

The following letters of Thayer written in 1918 are here given together, their chronological position in the correspondence of that year being ignored for reasons that seem sufficient. They concern the preparation of the article just referred to.

To Henry Holt

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *May 30th*, 1918

I was lunching the other day with some of Mr. Henry Adams's relations, who divulged to me the fact that after 'Democracy,' he wrote and published through your house, a second novel. The name I think was 'Esther' or 'Hester,' and I am eager to get hold of it. First, because I want to see whether I can discover him by his style; and next, because I should like to call attention to this unknown work in case I write an essay on him, as I feel tempted to do.

I cannot find the book in the Harvard Library, nor does any publisher's catalogue which I have consulted give it, or go back to 1882. If any copies remain in your stock — they must be pretty nearly buried in dust by this time — will you kindly have one sent to me and let me know the price.

Mr. A.'s relations think that this novel was better than 'Democracy,' and I imagine that the failure of the public to value it properly, helped to confirm his contempt for the public and the critics.

In last week's *New Republic* there was an article on Henry Adams,[2] but it seemed to me too aloof and elusive to

[1] August 10, 1918.

[2] Henry Adams died in Washington, May 27, 1918.

be yours — for I think of you as one who says with unmistakable clearness exactly what you think. I wonder who could have written it.

To Henry Holt

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *June* 12, 1918

I have been rummaging the old book-stores here for a copy of 'Esther' with no success: also the Harvard and Athenæum Libraries. If you will send me that copy, I shall be truly grateful, and I shall be very glad to pay for it at whatever price you value it. I like, if possible, to own the books I read, because I have a habit of making comments on the margins, which would not do in the case of borrowed books.

The apparent utter neglect of 'Esther' by the public and literary critics, when it came out, must have deepened Henry Adams's somewhat cynical view that his brother mortals wouldn't know a good thing if they saw it. For myself, however, I long ago gave up the delusion, which our old friend 'Festus' circulated, that 'the world knows nothing of its greatest men.' I don't believe that the Past overlooked many Dantes or Shakespeares, or Titians or Rembrandts, or that in the Present many Balzacs and Thackerays and Shelleys are dying of inanition and neglect.

To Henry Holt

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *June* 21, 1918

I waited for the book to come before answering your note and thanking you. The express has at last brought 'Esther' safely, and I have read the first chapter. It is unquestionably a genuine fragment of Henry Adams. I shall go through it slowly — as my eye permits — with

lively curiosity. Thus far, it produces the same impression on me that 'Democracy' did. It is the product of a man who has *generalized* deeply and widely on life but who hasn't quite the talent of *individualizing* life. His persons talk like the embodied doctrines which we used to read in dialogues, in which a Sophist, an Atheist, an Early Christian, a Pagan, a Man of the World, used to defend their various tenets. Of course H. Adams isn't so crude as that but he tends towards that.

Thank you for asking me to let you have for the *Unpopular Review* whatever I may write about Adams. I haven't decided yet to write anything, but I will gladly submit to you whatever may come. If you catch Paul More — and I hope you will — you won't need me. His criticism is always triangulated with the universe as its base line; mine is only a little patch where shrubs and flowers and a good many weeds grow at will, but the sun shines on it by day and the stars look down on it by night.

I think you must have misunderstood Mr. Lodge, in regard to the publication of H. Adams's 'Education.' H. A. himself stipulated that the book should be brought out in the same format, etc., as that of his brother Charles Francis, and, nominally under the auspices of the Mass. Historical Society. Houghton and Mifflin published C. F. A.'s 'Autobiography' and there never was any question of having a different publisher for the 'Education.' I feel sure that Senator Lodge never intended to mislead you in this matter.

To Henry Holt

MAGNOLIA, MASS., *June* 28, 1918

I return Lodge's letter, and I have no more knowledge of the matter than I wrote you last time. I am amused at

his surprise at not having heard from Henry Adams about 'Esther.' Except you and possibly one or two of H. A.'s *very* intimates nobody knew about it until lately. I doubt whether H. A. openly admitted to Lodge that he wrote 'Democracy.'

When I spoke of 'Esther' to Brooks Adams at Harvard Commencement, last week, he looked puzzled and expressed doubt as to the authorship, and spoke as if he hadn't read the book.

I think I gave you a more definite impression that I intend to write an article on H. A. *now* than I meant to give. I have already promised to deliver a course of lectures at Brown University next winter, and these have to be written, and I write such things slowly; so that except for anti-Boche propaganda which I regard as my duty and almost the only way I can help the Cause, my work seems cut out for me until after Christmas. Don't let me cut out Paul More. . . . There are so few critics, here or anywhere who have any knowledge, or whose taste is more than impressionistic caprice. Howells told me that a young fellow, whose name I've forgotten, wrote an entire volume criticising Howells's work. On talking with him Howells found that the youth had read only one of his novels. . . .

To Henry Holt

MAGNOLIA, MASS., *July* 2, 1918

I have finished 'Esther' and shall want to send it back in the course of a week after I have some notes on it. Shall I send it to you at Burlington or at 18 West Forty-fifth Street?

I have not yet got far enough away from it to define it clearly to myself. It is amazingly clever—but is it more? The conversations are prescient but they seem to me to

spring from the author's desire to dazzle us by his wit or his irony rather than to convince us. He uses his rapier to let us see how dexterously he can fence rather than to slay his enemy, be it idea, doctrine, or opinion. Herein he differs from Voltaire.

But 'Esther' and 'Democracy' throw light on Henry Adams. He seems unable, by the way, to create a charming or sympathetic personage.

I am very much obliged to you for procuring this volume for me.

To Henry Holt

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *Oct. 23d*, 1918

I am very much obliged to you for your note, with your statement of the sales of H. Adams's 'Democracy.' An anonymous author who sells 14,000 copies of his novel, ought not to berate the public as an unappreciative beast.

I learn from Houghton and Mifflin that 22,000 copies of Adams's 'John Randolph,' in the American Statesmen Series, have been disposed of. So there too, it seems to me, he had every reason to be gratified.

I hope you thrive among your Green Mountains. We have seldom had a finer October than this here, and yours ought to be even better. I expect to be in New York for a couple of days in December, for the annual meeting of the American Arts and Letters, and if I can, I shall see you.

CHAPTER X

A LIFE OF ROOSEVELT

1919

THE war was over. Thayer had played his part in it, as best he could. He had allied himself as closely as his health and strength would permit with various sides of the vast collective work. He had used his pen and his voice to enlighten, to encourage his fellow citizens, to urge them to action, to stiffen their resolution. The strain of these years contributed undoubtedly to the shortening of his life.

But the opening week of 1919 brought him another shock. The death of Theodore Roosevelt, on January 6th, was a deep personal affliction. Thayer had known him for many years and had become very intimate with him. The war brought these two militant spirits close together, the man of action, the man of letters.

The loss of his friend prompted Thayer to write an appreciation of him. This took the form of a brief life, a 'personal narrative,' an 'intimate biography,' a 'sketch' he called it. An elaborate work of scholarship, similar to the 'Cavour,' a comprehensive Life and Times of Roosevelt, he never contemplated. As he said in a letter to Mr. F. N. Doubleday he must write within the reach of his present capacity; 'A long work of several volumes, going minutely into the details of Roosevelt's career — speeches, campaigns, Congresses, etc., would be quite beyond my powers and would besides, I think, limit the interest present and future in the biography. I shall have only a limited amount of eyesight to work with, and in case I undertook the biography, I should have to depend much on being

read aloud to. If you have never been reduced to this handicap, you can't realize how serious it is.'

But Thayer hoped that his sketch would present the main features of that striking career and outstanding character with such vividness and veracity as would render them full and sympathetic justice. He wished to leave on record his own knowledge of the man, his own judgment as to his significance, as to his services to his country, and to the world. The book in which he drew this portrait occupied his time very largely during 1919, issuing from the press at the close of the year. It was destined to have an astonishing circulation and a wide influence.

In 1919 Thayer republished in book form many of his war articles under the title of *Volleys from a Non-Combatant*. During that year also he delivered the Colver lectures at Brown University which were later published in a small volume under the title *Democracy*. In the same period he contributed several notable articles to the magazines.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, *January* 7, 1919

. . . Theodore Roosevelt's sudden death yesterday sent a great shock through my heart. I had come to know him intimately of late years, and to recognize what a transcendent figure he was.

If ever there was irony of Fate we have it here. Roosevelt roused our nation to prepare, and then he forced Wilson to declare — with utmost unwillingness — a State of War with Germany. It was his action, too, that drove Wilson to send our first troops to France. And now Wilson splurges thro' Europe as the original enemy of the Hun, and gets civic and martial crowns and poses as the savior and dictator of Civilization.

But History will show the true record, before all of us who know die.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, *January* 10, 1919

Olive has undoubtedly cabled you that she has heard from the War Department that Bert[1] and his companion, Hopkins, were killed, when their plane fell on September 12. Their bodies were buried together at a little place east of St. Mihiel, where they started. It seems to have been in German hands then, but the French had advanced beyond it before the Armistice. In a little note to Betty, Olive expressed great relief that the suspense was over, and satisfaction that Bert was 'at peace and happy' all these months. Brave soul she is, and she intends to go on with her life as usual — but what a void! We shall always think of Bert with great pride, and with envy. To achieve the highest thing possible in this life at twenty-one, and to die without stain, or doubt, or shadow — what more could anyone desire!

I have been grieving ever since Monday, when the news of Roosevelt's sudden death struck us all like a thunderbolt. Of late years I had come to know him very intimately, and mixed with my sense of personal loss is my understanding of the immense loss his death brings to this country, yes, and to the world.

He was our greatest public man since Lincoln, and as time sweeps us ahead, his figure will loom up larger and larger, as a mountain does when you recede from it. He was the only man here who was listened to the world over, when he spoke out against the Wilsonian doctrines. He had supreme courage. His foibles, which we all recognized

[1] Bertram Williams, Harvard '18, a nephew of Mrs. Foster.

and smiled at, because he was so near to us, and so natural with everybody, will be forgotten. His greatness will remain.

To Harry L. Koopman

CAMBRIDGE, *Jan.* 11, 1919

Many thanks for your letter. I was, perhaps, too solicitous but I always squirm at the possibility that I have misled my audiences. My treatment of 'Democracy'[1] is oblique because, after reflection, that seemed to me the best. I once went to Walt Whitman when I was struggling with a problem of evil which I tried to dispose of by a frontal attack, but he soon showed me that that wasn't the way to deal with it, and over and over again I have found that the great problems can't be settled by talk or argument, but — if at all — by living them through. Is not the solution of life itself to *live* it? Whether my lectures will suggest, even remotely, what I mean in this case, I can't tell — I can only hope.

Thank you for your reference to my little blue-bound volume of poems. You touch a nerve which connects a waning man of today with a youth of how many years ago! If the gods had been propitious, I should have been a poet. My dreams, my hopes, my desires, were for that. Prose was my second best, and I have tried to make that as good as I could. But ah! when I read five lines of real poetry I am whirled back to that other self with its emotions and its desires.

A few days before he died Henry Adams wrote me that he thought that I was his last reader of his 'Letter to Teachers,' and he humorously expressed the hope that I too, in

[1] Thayer's lectures at Brown University were later published in book form under the title *Democracy*, 1919.

my old age should be blessed with a last reader. I think that you are he, so far as the Poems go. I haven't dared to read them for over twenty years.

To Charles G. Washburn

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *January* 27, 1919

DEAR CHARLES:

I am impelled to write a personal little Biography of Roosevelt. It won't probably be so long as your book, and it won't run counter to the 'official' History, which I understand Joseph Bishop has already half finished.

I want especially to see as many of Theodore's intimate letters as I can and to learn from his intimate friends how they regarded his acts.

You, doubtless, had much correspondence with him, and if you will let me examine it, I shall be greatly obliged, and, as my work progresses, I may turn to you for information or interpretation.

I am glad to hear you are going to speak on T. R. at the next meeting of the Historical Society.

Very truly yours

WM. R. THAYER

P.S. Mrs. Roosevelt approves of my undertaking.

Early in 1919 Thayer went to New York to attend a meeting of the Executive Council of the American Historical Association, of which he was president during two years, 1918 and 1919. The following letter shows the terrible apprehension under which he lived during the last eight years of his life, an apprehension which he resolutely concealed from his friends, but which could never have been very long absent from his mind!

To Charles Downer Hazen

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *Feb. 3d*, 1919

DEAR DOWNER:

You were very good to telephone yesterday! Apparently, my eye is all right, and I am profoundly grateful; for I assure you that when I suddenly looked up at the meeting on Saturday, and saw nothing but the densest fog, not even E. B. Greene, who was three feet away, I felt scared. For I have been expecting this second eclipse for the last three years and a half.

But I don't think the other persons present detected my perturbation, and I went on presiding to the end of the session, when my seeing power gradually returned. Now that it is all over, and I know that I might have stayed on with you and had the cosy evening that I expected, and yesterday for more chat, and two or three calls, I regret that I listened to Prudence and rushed away. . . .

Goodbye — affectionate greetings and regrets to your wife, and kind remembrances to the Cow from whose stock I took such immense draughts. . . .

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, *February* 14, 1919

. . . I am planning to undertake a serious piece of work — a short sketch of Theodore Roosevelt. I came to feel real affection for him as a friend and although in the old Republican days I never agreed with him in politics, I have come to feel greater and greater admiration for him as a most remarkable man; and my instinct as a biographer impels me to try to make a living portrait of him. It will take six months, and it seems well-nigh crazy for one with an immoderate blood pressure, half an eye, and that damaged, on whom senility encroaches more and more

rudely, to venture on such an enterprise. But when I remember what an enormous physical handicap Theodore overcame, I feel that it would be ignominious for me not to make a try at it at least. If you have any of his letters to Will, or recall any episodes or characteristic sayings, do send them to me, and give me your blessing on the task.

If Michael Angelo had had both his hands cut off just when he reached his prime, I suppose he would have felt as I feel; then he would come to understand how unimportant the individual is, and he would learn to hypnotize himself and persuade his friends that feet are much more important than hands, anyway, and that statues, and painting, and biographies are luxuries, blessed if you will, but still luxuries. The statesman, or, in time of war, the master-general is indispensable, and his death or crippling, is a calamity. But the artist is not.

All well here. Betty is going tonight to the Opera House to hear Dr. Hugh Cabot, who has returned with the Harvard Unit and is a wonderful creature. . . .

To Henry Cabot Lodge

Massachusetts Historical Society
Fenway, Boston, *February* 15, 1919

Dear Senator Lodge:

. . . Thank you for your note in regard to my 'Hymn.' I am on the Massachusetts Commission to welcome the incoming soldiers and sailors, and our Chairman asked me to write something to this tune, which was T. R.'s favorite, and to include both a welcome and a regret. I did the best I could, but it does not need your critical eye to discover that the welding of two moods so conflicting was very difficult.

. . . I shall be grateful for a copy of your speech. Mrs.

Thayer read it aloud to me and we both agreed that it suited the occasion, admirably. I should think it would have frozen your marrow to speak to that Congressional audience, half of whom, as you know, were political opponents of yourself and of Theodore.

In looking back over my acquaintance and friendship with him of over forty years, I have felt a keen desire to speak him fair in death — and not merely fair, but true. So I am planning to write a little book on him, and I hope that when you come on for a few days, I may be able to ask you several questions. Theodore, as you know, chose Mr. Joe Bishop to be his 'official' biographer, and he had already done part of the work before Theodore died. The Scribners, who are to publish the book, refuse to allow me to make any *verbatim* extracts from Theodore's letters, even from those to myself. This will force me to take as many facts as I can from such letters as I may collect or see, and to use the facts without quotation marks. I have no intention of competing with Mr. Bishop or of infringing in any way on his rights, and the mere fact that I plan a little volume of forty or fifty thousand words, while he can hardly perform his task in less than four 'monumental' volumes, ought to allay any alarm or jealousy which my venture may have aroused in the Scribners. Of course, they are legally perfectly correct, but I can't help smiling at the thought that there is any competition in the matter.

At the meeting of the Historical Society on Thursday, Washburn read a most interesting paper on T. R.'s early days, by Mrs. Douglas Robinson. It was, of course, confidential.

This leads me to say that I hope that while your pen-vigor is still undiminished you will write the political history of the U.S. since 1890. No other person has the ma-

terial, the knowledge, the memories, that you have for such a work. Don't wait too long. Take pity on posterity, that vague aggregate of assumed friends, to benefit whom, even the most reticent or the most hard-hearted become voluble or kind.

To Mrs. Douglas Robinson

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *Feb.* 28, 1919

. . . I am very grateful for your letter — not only because of your kind offer of help, but also because it gives me real encouragement. My proposed sketch is the first piece of writing of this kind which I have attempted since I lost my right eye and have been playing toad under the barrow to an oculist, and I confess to you that the handicap is far greater than I dreamed it would be. . . . My chief anxiety, in undertaking the work is that, owing to my physical incapacity, it will fall far short of what I should like. . . .

I quite agree with you — Senator Lodge would be the fittest person to write the definitive biography. I told him so, but he inevitably replies that he has not the time for it. I urge him, nevertheless, to edit in a single volume his letters from Theodore, giving the necessary connecting links. Such a book will be invaluable. He tells me that Mr. Bishop called on him last week and seemed overwhelmed by his colossal task — and well he may be! How a man, at 71, can begin to learn the difficult and elusive art of biography makes me wonder. What would be said if, at 60, I started out to paint portraits in competition with John Sargent? But, for Theodore's sake, I hope for the best; and even if this 'official biography' doesn't fulfil our prayerful expectations, sooner or later the right biographer will come.

The Scribners have refused to allow me to quote from any of T.'s letters — even those to myself — but I hope that you and others who had intimate correspondence with him will let me see it so that I can know his motives and feelings in regard to those parts of his life which I touch upon.

Please thank your sister most cordially for her invitation to Farmington to look over her papers. I hope to get there during the early Spring, either by motor, with Charlie Washburn, or by train. I trust that the treatment at Hot Springs will do her much good. The other afternoon Dr. Paul Thorndike was telling me of the many happy evenings he enjoyed at her house in H—— days long ago when he went to New York to see Miss Sherman.

Do you think that all is in print that I need to know as to Theodore's decision to stand by the Republican Party after it nominated Blaine in 1884? A classmate of mine, who knew T. well, and used to practise law in St. Paul, assures me that Mr. Newel (afterwards Minister to Holland) declared to him that it was he who brought T. round to stand by the party. It used to be assumed that Lodge did it.

To Charles Downer Hazen

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *March* 19, 1919

DEAR DOWNER,

Your letter more than compensated me for the book which caused it.[1] After those papers were in type, and even in press, I had a qualm — a little one — at having attached your name to the enterprise, without first asking you. But then I thought that nobody outside of an insane asylum could possibly hold you responsible for the con-

[1] *Volleys from a Non-Combatant.*

tents, and I wished to have the fun of surprising you. I told the publisher frankly that I doubted whether anyone would buy this obsolescent stuff now. But they insisted on taking the risk and were apparently eager, as well as hopeful.

The contents seemed to me like slabs of cold lava, although when I wrote — when the volcano was in irruption — I had to wear an asbestos shirt.

So far as progress in number of words goes, I am getting on unexpectedly well with my little sketch of Roosevelt; as to quality, I doubt. I shall have to visit New York again for further interviews and more material. The visit depends somewhat on the homecoming of Mrs. Douglas Robinson; probably during the first week in April I shall take my courage in both hands, as the politician-orators say, and make another plunge into your vortex. . . .

To Charles Downer Hazen

CAMBRIDGE, *March* 26, 1919

It seems now to be pretty well settled that I shall make my trip to New York next week, and that Bessie will go with me. Do you want us to stay with you? Don't answer in a hurry, and don't answer unfrankly. But lay your hand upon your heart and get Clio, Jr., to lay hers on her heart, and reply with absolute honesty. Your hospitality has already been exorbitant, so do not feel that there is the slightest obligation for you to receive the poor old Thayers again. Only, we need to engage rooms in a hotel as soon as possible if we don't go to you; and so I write.

Mrs. Douglas Robinson, whom I must see, above everybody else on T. R. matters, reaches home by this Sunday, and so I can see her later in the week. I have Root, Beck, Putnam and other cisterns of information to tap, also, while I am in Gotham.

My little book is getting on well — 30,000 words, a generous half — already done. I only regret that I haven't eyes and strength and control of material to write a real biography of him, because I am more impressed than ever by his greatness. But youth, too, would have to be one of the ingredients I should need, and that is irrecoverable. . . .

To Charles Downer Hazen

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *April* 19, 1919

CARO CARLO:

This isn't a bread-and-butter (or even a milk-and-dropt-egg) acknowledgement: it's simply a greeting from a grateful patriarch. The T. R. sketch is two-thirds done, and I am working like a poor devil caught on a railroad bridge and running his hardest to keep ahead of an approaching locomotive. But what a sketch! I've just read over the copy, and if I had time, I would sit down and cry; but no doubt if the publisher says it's bad, I shall turn upon him like a wolf at bay. What queer, sad, mad — (and probably bad) creatures we writers are. I have just forty days to finish in, so I can feel Father Time's panting breath on the back of my neck, and I have to keep my hair trimmed to prevent his catching me by the *back*-lock. Do you suppose Condorcet — wasn't it he? — had similar anxiety in prison as he worked to wind up his book before they trundled him off to the Guillotine?

This is a holiday — Lexington and Concord Day. Why can't we also do something to provide a holiday for posterity? From all portents, Life is going to be rather grim for those who survive the present orgy of horrors, and poor old Posterity may be glad of any excuse to loaf or make merry.

Love to your Jewel! Please stop your mad drive —

yours and hers — and come on here, and feel the pleasant sensation of fresh, velvety moss growing on your back!

To Charles G. Washburn

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *April* 30, 1919

DEAR CHARLIE:

. . . As to the Taft muddle, I am afraid I can't in honesty omit that. Of course I shan't willingly stir up animosity, but a life of Roosevelt now would be incomplete without a statement, at least in outline, of the events from 1909 to 1916, which had a tremendous bearing on him and on the history of the country. It would not be just to him not to let the public know now, what he did, and why. A great many people still believe that he 'betrayed' Taft, 'betrayed' the Republican Party, and started the Progressive Movement to gratify his 'inordinate selfish ambition.' None of these things were true. I believe that I have proofs that they were not true, and I must state them.

Have you seen the new Life of T. R. by Dean W. D. Lewis of Philadelphia? He devotes nearly 100 pages to Roosevelt's last ten years, and henceforth, nobody can honestly keep mum on this period. Get it, and let me know what you think of it. So far as I can trail his statements, they are accurate.

Of course *you* did right in 1916 to pass over the whole subject of the schism. You were bent on reuniting the Republican party and of 'rehabilitating' T. R. in it, but I have only the historian's motive and duty, which is to tell the truth, and this duty, as I have experienced before, is often unpleasant. When I had to reveal Garibaldi's hostility to and shameful attack on Cavour, for instance, I reluctantly violently, but I went through the ordeal, and I believe that I could do no less.

But in this case, I shall not intentionally throw cayenne pepper on the raw spots of any of the living, and I believe that if the story is told truly, without venom, it will only increase the respect and admiration which the public now feels towards T. R. . . .

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *May* 19, 1919

. . . Don't overread on 'Volleys,' although I am proud to know that you and the King are often glued to those pages. I have been busy with my Sketch of Roosevelt, which is now nearly finished, otherwise I should have exploded in several other articles. No doubt it is safer to have this consecutive work to keep the lid on. I don't believe that it will be for the good of Italy, in the long run, to grab Fiume and Dalmatia. I don't believe in Wilson in any run. Have you heard this epigram of Frank Simonds? 'A politician can put anything over the American people if he takes care to be found in an attitude of prayer when the light is turned on.'

To Henry van Dyke

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *May* 26, 1919

DEAR CHAPLAIN:

Many thanks for your note about my *Scribner's* article on Walt.[1] On re-reading it in proof, I had qualms, because it seemed to exaggerate the importance of the interviewer with the interviewee. Of course, I didn't intend this. My fundamental objection to Walt is, that he had no moral sense. As a polytheist, his soul refused to prefer between good and evil. If you follow your appetite you are on the

[1] Article entitled 'Personal Recollections of Walt Whitman,' *Scribner's Magazine*, June, 1919.

only sure road (— to perdition, a plain reasoning man like myself would add). So, too, most of his 'poetry' fails to hold me. But occasionally there is a long, sonorous roll, like the landward-faring swell of Australasian seas, or a sudden poignant clutch at the heart, which captures me.

Bliss Perry, the good Samaritan among our critics, gave a fine talk on Walt yesterday.

How strange life must seem to you here, compared with what you were living *there!* Or does the latter seem already so strange, that it must have been a dream?

The following letter has reference to a set of candlesticks which Mr. Thayer had asked Mrs. Foster to procure for him in England that he might present them to Mrs. Thayer on the ocasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of their marriage.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, *June* 12, 1919

News from the American Express in New York that the *S.S. Caronia* has arrived with a heavy list to starboard caused by four solid silver candlesticks which she brought. I have sent on affidavits, consular certificates, documents, checks, and pretty much everything except Bessie's marriage certificate (which Cousin Joseph Allen forgot to sign), and so we have good hope that by next Sunday candles in those candlesticks will enable us to see what we are eating at dinner. Meanwhile, I feel that we ought to arrange to send you on a Cook's tour to the Hebrides, in order to recover the strength you have lost in hunting up those flat-fluted and wreathed-capitalled sticks. The Hebrides are well enough, so is Spitzbergen or the vexed Vermoothes, but the one place which will do you most good is Magnolia,

Massachusetts. We will have the salt-cod aroma from Gloucester piped into your bedroom, and there is nothing else as tonic as that, not even Scott's Emulsion of cod-liver oil. Bring Colonel Michael, too, it will do *him* good, and add as many of your progeny as the *S.S. Leviathan* can hold.

On July 1st, absolute prohibition goes into effect in these States. The papers are full (that's an unhappy expression) of references to this Day of Gloom. They suggest that the hymn be changed to 'In the sweet dry and dry.' They warn us that our individual lives and the public peace will be endangered by the dipsomaniacs, who will be unable to break off their bad habit suddenly. Many substitutes for a cheering glass have been invented. But as we have tried none, we can recommend none. Our spacious wine cellar has shrunk to the proportions of a homeopathic medicine chest. There are two bottles of sparkling Moselle, which Bessie's Uncle Danforth laid down, I think, in the Spring of 1877. As I hold them up to the light and look through the dusty and cobwebbed glass, the liquid inside seems as transparent as water, and I detect no sparkle. If you come, we will broach both of them in your honor. . . .

They celebrated the Jubilee of Mr. Crothers at the First Church the other night. I have attended nothing else so delightful as that, and Mrs. Crothers outdid them all in a brief reply of thanks. . . .

To Frank Nelson Doubleday

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *June* 14, 1919

I wrote Kipling for recollections, letters or other material concerning Theodore Roosevelt. He told me that he had burned all of T. R.'s letters, and that in his poem, 'Great Heart,' he had summed up all that he had to say

now. You have the American copyright on his poems. Will you kindly give me permission to quote a stanza or two from 'Great Heart,' in case I find that his lines will fit into my text?

We go down to Magnolia next week. Don't fail to stop and take a meal with us, or to spend the night, whenever you visit the Oracle this summer. I hope Arthur Page will do likewise.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY
FENWAY, BOSTON, *June* 17, 1919

. . . They generally expect a very large crowd of graduates this year, so many of whom are returning from the War, and Harvard is going to give at least two degrees to heroes of the War. Yesterday, at the Phi Beta Kappa celebration, Bliss Perry gave an excellent oration, the upshot of which was, that there is such a thing as Progress in the evolution of mankind, *quand même*. As we reflect on the last five years, it seems possible that if humanity were intelligent it would apply to itself poor Tom Hood's lines:

'But now it's little joy
To know I'm farther off from Heaven
Than when I was a boy.'

But I won't philosophize, and the presence of President Eliot at the exercises, vigorous, open-minded, humorous, even, certainly suggested that old age may be as satisfactory as youth. . . .

To Mrs. Michael Foster

MAGNOLIA, MASS., *July* 22, 1919

First — many thanks for your note from Paris, describing your trip to Crécy. The flowers you picked there and

enclosed recalled to me one of my favorite quotations from George Meredith —

> 'Forgetful is green earth: the Gods alone
> Remember everlastingly' —

Earth, which has no moral concerns, and no soul, covers up in a few years all traces of man's worst iniquities on battlefields — and it is well. Life would be intolerable if the marks of past crimes and pain were not obliterated. But the soul and moral sense live on, with the indelible memory, and the Gods — clothed in whatever strange fashion the fantasies of men have conceived, cannot be set aside or destroyed. As Meredith says

> 'They strike
> Remorselessly, and ever like for like:
> By their great memories the Gods are known.'

They remembered in 1919 the German crime against Alsace-Lorraine in 1871, and they struck remorselessly. I wonder how many of the blunders and worse which are imbedded in the new Peace Treaty will be punished by the Gods, ten, twenty or fifty years hence. . . .

To Worthington C. Ford

MAGNOLIA, MASS., *Aug.* 14, 1919

DEAR WORTHINGTON:

When I think of your chronic condition during 20 hours of every day, it seems foolish for me to remark that I have been busy. Still, that is the truth, I have been through the galleys of 'Roosevelt' and am now finishing the page proofs, something over 400 pages. My work seems dull and colorless. Why does anybody write books? or at least why do I? 'Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?' I cry out against myself, like the irate father against his son in Molière's Comedy.

But Roosevelt's career when you follow it from end to

end, was amazing. Two months from now everybody will be heaving brickbats at me, so get your supply at once, the prices will go up rapidly. I thought of cornering the market for self-protection, but then it seemed to my generous soul that that would be mean, why deprive you and everybody else of the pleasure of thinking me crazy, or senile, or infatuated; so I shall build a bomb-proof in the back yard of 8 Berkeley St., and take the consequences. . . .

I haven't had time yet to go through the John Hay letters, but I foresee that we may read them and those of Spring-Rice and Henry Adams from different points of view. You being (in spite of ——) a real historian in search of *historical* material will naturally look for that, whereas I, being an apprentice biographer, and having already written a life of Hay, shall relish many *non-historical* parts, which round out 'Hay,' as a biographical subject.

I have to go to Stockbridge tomorrow to attend Memorial exercises for Fred Crowninshield. Next week I hope to be free — And then for the Hay letters. Are you getting any vacation? If you aren't, your President ought to shake his long forefinger at you and say 'Tut! Tut!' in his mellifluous way.

Beveridge is giving a dinner to Philander Knox on Saturday night, and I am sorry that my visit to Stockbridge prevents me from going to it, but you will doubtless be there. When I last saw B. ten days ago, he seemed to me nineteen twentieths crazy, but he said his last proofs would be done in a fortnight, and so I hope he will pull through. His hair is whitening and stands erect, and he speaks with the energy of Marius startled among the ruins of Carthage. But everybody says these last volumes are fine, and I am delighted for his sake.[1] . . .

[1] References are to Beveridge's *Life of John Marshall.*

To Henry van Dyke

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *October* 24, 1919

DEAR DR. VAN DYKE:

Will you excuse me if I resort to my Secretary's calligraphy to reply to your most kind note? I haven't much eyesight for reading and writing, and the oculist restricts me mostly to head-lines.

Your approval of my Sketch of Roosevelt cheers me. So many of the reviewers don't like either him or me, and devote their review to stating that fact. The question whether the book as a *Biography*, is well done or not, never occurs to them; but then, Biography as an art has been wofully ignored by the critics and literary students.

I glowed at your commendation of my Conclusion, because I wrote those paragraphs right from the heart. Usually, I don't let myself go, for I have a horror of artificial purple patches.

I hope to see you in New York next month, at the annual meeting of the Academy of Arts and Letters.

Faithfully yours

WM. R. THAYER

To
Hon. Rev. Prof. Dr. Chaplain Henry van Dyke. (Have I left out any titles?)

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *October* 24, 1919

. . . I envy England Lloyd George in this crisis, although so many persons shake their heads at him. Still, he has managed for five years, to do the trick over and over again, and he seems to have inexhaustible courage and resourcefulness, and confidence that he can succeed. How different from any of our national leaders! Happily we have one

exception in Massachusetts — Governor Coolidge. Last month the Boston Police voted to join the American Federation of Labor. The purpose was obvious. If the Police Force were a Labor Union, it could be called out on a sympathetic strike whenever any of the other Unions struck and resorted to violence. This would, of course, leave the city at the mercy of hoodlums. Governor Coolidge backed up the Police Commissioner, E. U. Curtis, who refused to allow the police to unionize, and when they did unionize, he dismissed them. The Mass. Democrats, in their platform, insist that they shall be reinstated and that it is the chief issue in the campaign. Think of W. E. Russell's party sinking to that! There is a W. E. R., Jr., however, who is running for District Attorney of Middlesex County, and many of us Republicans and Independents intend to vote for him, and we don't believe that he will ever countenance such a cynical disregard of fundamental Law and Order, without which, there can be no Government. Meanwhile, 2300 Boston women, incited by the deserting policemen and by Bolshevist reptiles, hold a mass-meeting and weep and rant to have the policemen reinstated.

Dearest Margaret, it would be far pleasanter to write on a different topic, or even to sit upon the sands with you and tell sad stories of the deaths of kings. We aren't discouraged. Sane and sober people are perplexed. I long ago decided that I could do no good by speculating over what was going to happen. The good that we can do is to keep our heads and to preach over and over again that wickedness is not virtue, that lying is not truth, that cruelty is not humanity, and that the half-baked projects of social and industrial reformers must not be accepted at the sacrifice of what Time has proved to be right. . . .

To Charles Downer Hazen

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *October* 30, 1919

I won't pretend that I haven't read your letter with great satisfaction. Of course, I say to myself, this is a friend's estimate, and besides, he is a Rooseveltian too, so discount — discount his praise. But after I do this, I add 'But he's a historian, and a man of truth, and so he can't be wholly wrong.'

At any rate, you have seen in my little book what I hoped somebody would see — and what I hope further — for the sake of T. R.'s reputation — may be accepted as the true view of him. I don't imagine that I can make, or mar, him with posterity, but I suppose that it depends on what we say of him now whether he comes into his own sooner rather than later.

After all, I am very distrustful of my ability to achieve the results which I see ought to be achieved; and I am more conscious of my shortcomings and of my handicap from half-blindness than of any mastery: and so I shall remain humble, in spite of your splendid 'reward of merit.' If I didn't, my hair would turn to a beautiful golden-auburn Venetian color, and burst into curls, and people would think me cockey. . . .

To Robert Grant

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *Nov.* 2, 1919

DEAR BOB:

Your book has come and is most welcome.[1] Thank you for it, not less than for the inscription.

In spite of my 'slacker' vision, I have already read one of the chapters, and I expect to achieve them all in due season.

[1] Judge Grant's *Law and the Family*, 1919.

One thing strikes me: You have done a fine thing in putting before the public a 'popular' discussion of these important subjects, in such a form that everybody can read and understand it. You write with the authority and experience of a judge *plus* the technical skill in presentation of a novelist.

I feel that the book must have a wide circulation; I have no doubt that it deserves one — or that it will do good to everyone that reads it.

Again, much gratitude!

Faithfully yours

WM. R. THAYER

To John T. Morse, Jr.

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *November* 11, 1919

... Your approval of my 'Roosevelt' gives me great satisfaction and a calm heart. I have reached the age when I am more than ever impressed — often staggered — by my shortcomings, and correspondingly amazed by the excellence of the Masters, who seem to increase in worth with the passing of time. I feel, too, as life draws to an end, how insignificant most individuals, including myself, are. A few years — and the biographer will be forgotten, and it matters nothing. But it matters a great deal that, if Roosevelt is the national figure which I believe him to be, my sketch of him should be true, and should be the forerunner of a life-size portrait. If I have seemed to you to draw some of the features correctly, other readers may agree, until a popular right judgment shall be formed and shall prevail.

I needn't tell *you* how gratifying it is to know that at least one reader — yourself — will understand. I have been hammering away for thirty years to convince the

public that Biography is an art — a very high art: but only the other day one of our Harvard professors of History expressed surprise when I made this statment to him. 'Why,' he said, 'I never saw anything in biography except material for history.' . . .

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, *November* 24, 1919

DEAREST M:

The mere mention in your last letter that you were thinking of coming over gave me a thrill which still vibrates. Let me quote to you from a poem which Charles Kingsley wrote to another sweet maid:

'Do noble things, not dream them all day long.' Having done the noblest things for the wounded soldiers during the war, come over and repeat them to us who sorely need any noble manifestation, and especially the mere sight of you.

But first, I suppose that you must go to San Remo and absorb some of the Italian sunshine before you come. I am so old and lazy that at times I would like to do nothing except loll and loaf, on Bertolini's terrace at Naples, or on the roof of the old Hotel Tiberio at Capri, as I did more than forty years ago. I knew then that that was one of the delightfulest places in the world, but I was young and restless, and eager to get into life, and I never thought that to doze, and to dream, and to watch clouds float by, and to feel no responsibility would be the most seductive wish I could imagine. That is not true, either, because I could not long be content without having friends near, happy friends.

Your letter about my Roosevelt gave me real delight, and I shall keep it along with others by Bryce and John T. Morse, as the best that could come to me. Of course, affection influenced your criticism but the main thing

is that the book gave you pleasure, and, as I grow older, to give pleasure seems to me to be one of the best things we can do. . . . It is of immense importance that a nation's heroes should be *real* heroes worthy of a nation's admiration, and of setting an example. I believe that Theodore was both, and that the sooner that our American people so see him and accept him, the better. . . .

. . . Last week B. and I went to New York on a spree. I lunched with my fellow Immortals of the Academy of Arts and Letters[1] — In the evening Bess and I went to a grand banquet to the Prince of Wales, a really dazzling affair at the Waldorf-Astoria. Bess sat in the first row of the first box, looking right down at the high table, and her maternal instinct prompted her to wonder whether the Prince's Mamma would not have worried to see her darling boy eat nothing but great quantities of almonds and smoke cigarettes. Taft presided admirably, and beside his huge carcass his Royal Highness looked as tiny as Alice did among the giants. But the Prince has made a splendid impression here, captivating all hearts, except, of course, those of the Black-blooded Sinn Feiner and doing more to promote good feeling between the two nations than could be done by any Commission. He was so spontaneous and good natured, and he looked so young, that he might have been a sophomore at Harvard instead of a man of twenty-five years past. But no Harvard Sophomore could have been so un-selfconscious.

The next day we lunched with Mrs. Douglas Robinson, Theodore Roosevelt's sister, and one of my particular 'admirations.' . . .

[1] Thayer was elected a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters in November, 1914. In 1918 he was awarded the gold medal for history and biography by the National Institute of Arts and Letters.

We are planning a Lecture Tour to St. Louis, Chicago, Toronto and other metropoles 'in the Provinces,' leaving here on Christmas Day, and returning after four weeks. I tremble already at the mere thought of it, but I am resolved to put it through. . . .

Wilson, who is certainly the most conceited and stubborn of men, caused the Senate to vote against the Treaty and the League of Nations, the other day. Those who think as we do are glad that the struggle ends in this way. 'It is something to have saved the United States Constitution,' David J. Hill said to me, Thursday evening.

To Charles W. Townsend

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *December* 2, 1919

DEAR CHARLIE:

Many thanks for your letter. You simply confirm me in my belief that no man ought to write a book. Of course, I don't wish to slur naturalists of any kind, and I hadn't the slightest idea that my phrase would hit any of them on a raw spot. As to birds 'furry' how absolutely you speak! The expression as I remember it, referred to creatures of *fur and feathers*. I couldn't suppose that anyone whose intelligence enabled him to read my modest pages, would imagine that I believed, or that I wished him to believe, that birds had fur. But, if you press me too far I shall ask you to prove, if you can, that our old friends the pterodactyls *didn't* have fur.

Good luck to you, and a Merry Christmas, dear Charlie, and please give my best greetings to Mrs. Charles.

CHAPTER XI

THE CLOSING YEARS

1920–1923

In December, 1919, Thayer, as President of the American Historical Association, attended its annual meeting, in Cleveland, and delivered the presidential address, choosing as his subject 'Fallacies in Recent History.'[1] After Cleveland he made a lecture tour, going to Indianapolis, where he was the guest of his friend Ex-Senator Beveridge — who was much interested in this trip and who contributed much to its pleasure and success — to St. Louis, Chicago, Ann Arbor, and other places. Returning to Cambridge for a few weeks he then visited, in February, the University of Virginia where he delivered three lectures on the Barbour-Page Foundation. These were published in March, 1920, in a small volume entitled *The Art of Biography*, a book which is a distillation of a lifetime of wide reading and reflection, and of years of practice of the art which is its theme.

In 1920 Thayer wrote a number of articles on the topics of the day or on literary subjects and in 1921 he began a short life of Washington which he hoped might present that great historic figure in a form more popular, more human, and more really vital than the biographies which had previously appeared had succeeded in doing. He doubted whether he would live to finish the task, even thus modestly conceived. But he felt as he had always felt that life without work had no meaning and that the worker

[1] Thayer was President of the American Historical Association during two years, 1918 and 1919.

finds his greatest satisfaction in the very fact of working. Mount Vernon, Thayer once wrote his daughter, 'is for me the one transcendent shrine in the world.' He now laid his tribute upon this shrine. The *Life of Washington* was the last book that was to come from his gifted and unwearying pen. It was published in the fall of 1922.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *January* 21, 1920

The Thayers are back in their home after a month's travel through the Middle West, a region of great sooty cities, with endless avenues and countless electric lights, and wealth that would shame Imperial Rome, and people of inexhaustible hospitality. . . .

I met a great many interesting persons, and have come back with a feeling, not that our Yankee ideals were not good, but that we have got to fight to keep them from being swamped by the hustlers west of the Hudson. . . .

. . . At one of the cities we visited, we met a somewhat pompous and illiterate academic dowager, whose daughter, years before, became engaged to a man named Moses. The mother gave a luncheon to her friends, and said: 'The name, of course, sounds Jewish, and there is a little Jewish blood in his veins, but his family were not present at the Crucifixion, they were sojourning at Carthage.'!!!

To Charles Downer Hazen

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *January* 22, 1920

Wandering Willie has returned, after zigzagging for nearly four weeks through the Middle West. If you think you know *these* United States without having been to Cleveland, Chicago, St. Louis and similar villages in the

land of the Ojibways and the Black Feet and the Seminoles (if they were there), you are mistaken. Your boasted Fifth Ave. would look like a mere country lane compared to the thirty miles of boulevard which runs from the University of Chicago on the South to Winnetka on the North. No doubt you think that the brains of America are accumulated in Gotham and come to a head, so to speak, in the University of Columbia. But you would not harbor this delusion if you had mingled with the mentality of Indianapolis, where I found more keen and catholic persons per square foot, than I could meet in the Harvard College Yard. But I won't go on, or you will say that I am exaggerating.

I gave ten or a dozen lectures, and we met innumerable hospitable persons, who entertained us lavishly. The prairies are poorer in pheasants and other fowl on our account, and the lobster and oyster beds of the Wabash and Mississippi were stripped for us. But I am glad to be home, to be within reach of friends and of my daily work. . . .

To Charles Downer Hazen

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *January* 23, 1920

DEAR DOWNER:

I am sending you to-day a photograph in return for the one of yours you gave me at Magnolia. But whereas yours was of gentleman-like proportions, mine is gigantic, as if it were to be hung in St. Peter's. I told Pirie Mac Donald that I wanted a small cabinet-size picture and this is what he made. Don't cumber your wall with it, but put it in a drawer. Only, whenever you look at it, be assured that a true friend of yours is looking into your eyes.

Love to Signora Sally.

Faithfully yours

WM. R. THAYER

William Roscoe Thayer
1919

This is positively the last I shall ever have taken, so that you need not dread another infliction.

To Albert J. Beveridge

CAMBRIDGE, *February* 4, 1920

DEAR BEV.

I conclude that Old Father Time is one of your corn-fed, Hoosier band. Otherwise he couldn't have so much vim and hustle. Here a month has passed since we were enjoying your hospitality in your 'little grey home in the West,' and now we are trying to look over the tops of melting snow drifts in the effete East. As I try to assort and look over my recollections, I am overwhelmed by the kindness you all showed us. And among the chief pleasures, those talks with you stand out. The West, that is, the Middle West, seems to be run by a tireless dynamo, and I think that you get more of the 'juice' than anybody else.

My neighbor, Judge Jeremiah Smith, formerly a professor at the Harvard Law School, and one of the soundest and dearest of men, was talking to me about your Marshall the other night. He was most enthusiastic, pronounced it a very great book, and especially valuable at this time when the American people needs to be told of the real American principles, which Marshall more than anyone else did most to define.

I wish you were here to discourse on the political situation. Wood seems to be the favorite at present, as he was at St. Louis, Chicago, and the other places we visited. But Hoover has a great following which has not yet been organized. The practical politicians I meet don't agree with you that he will be unpopular because of the food restrictions he imposed during the War. My own warning is, don't let the old Machine dictate. . . .

To Henry Cabot Lodge

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *February* 12, 1920

. . . I hope that the Treaty and Covenant business will be off your hands soon. Twenty years hence, sober people will approve the way in which the Senate has resisted Wilson's autocracy, just as sober and patriotic men now approve the courage and judgment of the Seven Republicans who voted against Andrew Johnson's impeachment.

To Charles Downer Hazen

THE JEFFERSON, RICHMOND, VA.
Feb. 23, 1920

We've had a fine trip. The University of Virginia made a real impression on me — such as neither Harvard, nor Yale, nor your portentous institution at Morningside can make, and Pres. Alderman is a trump.

At Richmond, I have had some very stirring emotions, and now I want to read over the story of the War between the States, as they call it here. There is a striking *ensemble* in their public buildings and Confederate monuments; but you feel — or is it imagination? — that slavery was corroding everything, except their valor and fortitude. Friday night, I spoke by invitation at the Capitol. . . .

To Albert J. Beveridge

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *March* 4, 1920

Our visit to Virginia was altogether satisfactory. I gave some lectures at the University and fell in love with the beauty of Charlottesville and its surroundings. Your 'scoundrel' T. Jefferson designed and set in motion the most impressive University I have seen in the United States. I found President Alderman most attractive. In Richmond I spoke in the Hall of Delegates, and wondered

what J. Davis and the other Rebel orators of sixty years ago would have thought to have a Bostonian, a thick and thin Yankee, speak on the same platform where they had stood.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *March* 10, 1920

. . . It's a sign of old age, I suppose, to shrink from all suggestions of change. I am a spinster's cat, fond of the chimney corner, and I am also a miserable coward. My Reason tells me that I can't escape what mankind must undergo: I do not dread death for theological reasons; but sometimes I have a presentiment of the possible loneliness of it — to be thrust out there into infinity without the dear ones I have had here for companions — that haunts me. And I reflect that as there has been something for me to do here, there will be something there too. And after all, the moments when the heart is wholly satisfied in this life are so brief — so rare. . . .

I forgot to thank you the other day for Keynes's book, which came safely. Bess has read it to me, and I have been greatly interested by it. His sketches of Wilson, Lloyd George and Clemenceau are memorable. His economic figures and arguments I didn't follow clearly, hearing them read, and being, as you know, slow at statistics, and very skeptical of them. If he wishes us to let Germany off — to kiss and forget — I protest, No. Let us have no vengeance, but let us not be so immoral as to say that we must not strive to see justice done. It may be inconvenient and all that — but so are most duties. I believe that who breaks should pay — that Germany should make as much restitution as she is physically capable of. The lives she can never give back; the agonies she can never atone: but

she should pay the last pfennig that her means allow. If Keynes wishes to spare her, in order to readjust the economic situation as quickly as possible, and hang out the sign 'Business as usual,' I am not with them. England will gain most — but the gain will be only material. . . .

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, *March* 29, 1920

Sargent made one of his drawings of me the other day, and I am wondering what you will think of it. To see the great artist work gave immense satisfaction to me, who also practice an Art in a humble fashion. Now that you have Eustis to escort you home, there is absolutely no reason for your not coming. We shall begin to get ready for you.

To Charles Downer Hazen

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *March* 30, 1920

Unless earthquake, tornado, or other act of God intervenes, I shall start tomorrow, Wednesday morning, by the 10 o'clock train and reach your house about 4.30. Don't prepare any evening frolic for me, not even a front seat at a De Valera meeting. I will either go out to make a call, or sit in your study and meditate. The Vortex always induces meditation in me. 'What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue,' and how your motors pursue every poor foot passenger in your streets! . . .

I shall be glad to see anyone whom you may invite to dinner on Thursday. Perhaps it would be safer not to ask persons who may have attended my lecture in the afternoon. I shall wear the Order of Balaam's Ass, probably the rarest decoration available.

Mi prosterno ai piedi della tua Signora.

To W. Cameron Forbes

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *April* 23, 1920

DEAR CAM:

As I told you, I am very much obliged to you for your letter on T. R. I feel that it is a great compliment when so busy a man as you, takes the time to dictate so long and important an essay as that to me. It would require a week for me to reply to you in kind, and I can't do that.

As I said, the other day, I think we agree in essentials much more than my book may, at first sight, lead you to suppose. I realize fully that great combinations of Capital — whether you call them Trusts or something else — are now necessary, in order to transact the enormous business of the world. But seeing this clearly, I see also that these combinations must somehow or other be prevented from dominating the Government. Of course, many persons urge that the Government itself should run them; but I am an Individualist, and place my hopes on diminishing rather than increasing Government control of railroads, mines, and Big Business in general. I think that T. R. meant to do exactly this, in curtailing the greed and power of the Interests, and so I am with him.

Next, as to his action in 1912: I think that he was, in essence, as disinterested as a Crusader; you think that he was selfish, and that when he found he could not run the Republican Party, as it was engineered by the Machine, he decided to ruin it. I believe that his previous career disproves this charge and I hoped that even my brief sketch furnished evidence to that effect. You don't agree.

Finally, T. R.'s superficial egotism troubles you more than it does me. I say *superficial*, because when I came to know him well I discounted much of it. I don't believe that he was actually more insistent on putting his measures

through than President Eliot has been, but President E. has known how to camouflage better.

Again many thanks. This isn't a reply — merely an acknowledgment.

To H. Nelson Gay

CAMBRIDGE, *May* 14, 1920

... Last evening I attended a real *banchetto* given in honor of the Editor of the *Boston Transcript*, who has been decorated Commendatore della Corona d'Italia, in recognition by Italy of the friendship of the American press during the war. I think that all these friendly 'gestures' on the part of Italy are both diplomatic and useful. The American people does not share in Wilson's hatred of Italy, and so the more that American good-will and friendliness can be cultivated, the better.

You would have been surprised to see at the *banchetto* a hundred and fifty or more of the prosperous business men and merchants and lawyers from the Italian colony in Boston. Of course, there was much enthusiasm even without the stimulus of the rosy, but they did allow each of us a small glass of *China*, although both Governor Coolidge and Mayor Peters were there.... I was called on to speak and received what cub-reporters call, 'an ovation.' But I think that they mistook me for Longfellow, or else their chronology was out of joint, for they spoke of me as the 'Americano-Italianissimo' of Boston, for two or three generations back! Still, it's pleasant to be thought of as filling that rôle, even though the arithmetic be inaccurate. I shall never regret anything I have been able to do — and it has been very, very little — for Italians or for Italy....

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *May* 26, 1920

I am sending you a copy of the Popular Edition of my 'Roosevelt,' because it contains all the corrections which I have made since the book came out last October — *errata* which, no doubt, have much irritated you and kept you awake. . . .

I try not to bore you by references to my work and its results, and I have mentioned them as little as possible; but I shall refer to this Popular Edition, because I think it will surprise you as much as it did me. Some enterprising publishers — rainbow-chasers, I should think them — believe that my 'Roosevelt' will have a great circulation in this summer of the Presidential Campaign, and so they are issuing an edition of 100,000 copies at a dollar apiece.[1] Such a thing has never been done before in the history of American publishing, and I doubt whether it could be matched in England. I am so incredulous that I can't realize that it refers to me. I only hope that those publishers won't become bankrupt as victims of their misplaced zeal. On the other hand, I am most gratified to think that the words and example of Roosevelt should be spread as widely as possible, and should help the country in this crisis. Never was there more need of his courage. . . .

To Robert Grant

CAMBRIDGE, *June* 1, 1920

DEAR BOB:

I earnestly invite you to write a poem — long or short — and to deliver it at our Phi Beta Kappa dinner on Monday afternoon, June 21st.[2] For sins unspecified, I am this

[1] Up to January 1, 1926, over 26,000 copies of the regular edition had been sold; over 86,000 of the popular edition.

[2] Thayer had not been elected a member of Phi Beta Kappa while in college.

year President of the Harvard Chapter, and, as I wish to make the dinner as distinguished as possible, I call upon you for help. I don't remember any occasion, at the Tavern, or elsewhere, when you have fallen short in your verse. And so this petitioner will ever pray. If, as your son states, the Muse visits you chiefly in your bath-tub, please take three baths a day, until the verses I ask for are done.

Yours ever

WM. R. THAYER

President

P.S. The dinner, as you know, comes after the exercises at Sanders Theatre, and begins at about two o'clock in the afternoon. The speakers go into action some time after three.

To Albert J. Beveridge

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *June* 3, 1920

DEAR BEV:

Heartiest congratulations to you on receiving the Pulitzer prize for Biography. Of course you were so easily first that you had really no competitor. During the winter, —— talked to me casually about it, and said that my 'Roosevelt' was the only other product of the year he was considering, but I told him that my 'Roosevelt' was only a sketch, whereas you had produced a monumental work. I thought your anti-Jeffersonian opinions might trouble him but they didn't. . . . At any rate, you have the prize, and richly deserve it, and I congratulate you.

I also am happy to know that the University of Penn-

He was made an Honorary Member in 1892 and was President of the Harvard Chapter in 1920.

sylvania is going to give you an LL.D. I hope sometime that you will come to Harvard on a similar errand, although, as you know, our 'Cold Roast Boston' crowd are very tenacious of their prejudices and they are hardly yet ready to take T. R. for what he really was, and much less his wild young lieutenants like you. But we shall see. Periods of revolution, like longevity, bring about strange reversals of judgment.

Tell your wife that when I remember how you worked two years ago, until your hair stood up on end in great masses like a picture of Banquo's Ghost, which has always amazed me, I wondered whether you would hold out. But you did, and now you have earned haloes enough to hold your locks down in place, and to cover up any bald spot, which may come in later years. . . .

I shall watch the proceedings at the Convention next week very eagerly. . . .

Good bye, good luck; wear a broad-brimmed straw hat with a large cabbage leaf inside. Keep all parts of your body cool, and especially your head.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *June* 9, 1920

. . . I am delighted that Sargent's drawing pleased you. When I found that he would make it, I thought that I would take a flyer to that extent; first, because no portrait had ever been made of me, and next, because I happened to have enough doubloons which I earned by lecturing at the University of Virginia. It took him only two hours and ten minutes, and I had the greatest satisfaction in watching a master artist at his work. We talked incessantly all the time.

To Albert J. Beveridge

HARVARD CLUB OF BOSTON
June 13, 1920

Dear battle-scarr'd old Bevy,
My heart is wae and heavy
To see cornfed Hoosier men
Down'd by Buckeye snakes again!

How wonderfully Our Lady Fortune — whom you call 'Cocotte'! — gets her work in. Had T. R. lived, he would have been nominated unanimously; instead the man who snarled at his heels, is chosen!!

But I won't go on rhyming, because the rhyme may force me to say something I do not mean. I am not sure that this is zoölogically correct.

And after all, perhaps you worked for Harding's nomination. Perhaps he's better than we here fear — I have an indistinct memory that he wasn't always as appreciative of T. R. as some of us are. . . .

I wish you were with me to report of the week's frenzies. Perhaps you can remember enough of them to tell me this summer. We are going to Magnolia, and shall be there from July 4 on.

I hope you didn't work yourself to nervous tatters. At any rate, you beat Johnson, which is much, and some others who didn't look — from this distance — properly carbolized. (?)

Coolidge is a solid and safe man, and might well have headed the ticket. I thought the platform — as much as my eyesight let me read — was a masterpiece for all the straddlebugs to envy.

Come in and let's cultivate the Muses on a little oatmeal.

To Henry Holt

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *June* 25, 1920

DEAR MR. HOLT:

I take great pleasure in introducing to you Mrs. Anna Robeson Burr, who is sending you the manuscript of a book. Assuredly, she needs no introduction, but I feel it a real honor for me to bespeak your best consideration for her.

You doubtless read her remarkable study of 'Autobiography,' published a dozen or fifteen years ago, and going to the very heart of the subject. In 1914, she brought out 'Religious Confessions and Confessants,' a book so important, in my estimation, that I feel proud to have lived in the time when it was issued; for it is one of those books whose course is not measured by the year, or by the decade, but gives lustre, when posterity looks back on an era that is dead.

Mrs. Burr's present work on Mysticism ought to show the origins of many of the current beliefs and cults. I daresay that it will traverse some of your own views, but I think of you as a man with the true sporting instinct, who will welcome an able presentation of the other side. Any publisher ought to take great satisfaction in having such a book on his list.

We expect to visit the Charles MacVeaghs at Monadnock, during the middle of August, and I hope that something will bring you there, as it did two years ago, so that we may have the pleasure of seeing you. I hear that Corinna Smith is going to France again. She and Joe have become incurably peripatetic.

Please remember me cordially to Mrs. Holt, and tell her that I look forward to continuing the conversation we had at the Hazens' dinner last winter.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *June* 26, 1920

. . . Commencement this year has been normal for the first time since 1914. Harvard gave an LL.D. to General Pershing, who was suffering from Collywobbles, but bore up bravely through the exercises. . . . I was pleased at being re-elected to the Board of Overseers by the largest vote cast. It really surprised me, because I thought that my outspokenness during the war, and on Wilson, would probably defeat me. The Harvard public, however, seem not to have read my blasts; hence their vote in my favor.[1] . . .

To Henry Holt

MAGNOLIA, MASS., *September* 12, 1920

DEAR HENRY:

The proof of my Norton article[2] with your letter enclosed, came the other day, and I at once corrected it, and forwarded it to Morey and Sons, Printers, Greenfield. I hope it arrived in time for your October number, if that suits your schedule.

We have just returned from a motor trip to Cape Cod and Provincetown. How reverent and humble it makes you feel to see the dour conditions amid which our ancestors got a foothold on this continent! When I walk up and down Fifth Avenue, I am amazed by the wealth and bravado and control over natural forces of our generation; but is it not better to stir men to reverence than to astonishment? In New York I think of the Tower of Babel and the insolence of those who planned it. *Absit omen!*

Why don't you commission one of your young writers,

[1] Thayer was Overseer of Harvard 1913–1919; 1920–1923.

[2] Article entitled 'The Sage of Shady Hill,' and published in the *Unpartizan Review*, January, 1921.

who has insight as well as power of expression, to put a true, vivid, and impressive description of our Cape Cod pioneers into a little book that will be read by millions? . . .

To Edward K. Rand

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *November* 2, 1920

DEAR MOST LEARNED ONE:

Unworthy as I am, I have received with due humility and gratitude, your little pamphlet on 'The Supposed Autographa of John the Scot.' How could you condescend to honor a worm such as I am? Not since the days when I read 'Patsey the Kid,' 'Jerry the Bum,' 'Roaring Mike,' 'The Wild Man of Five Points,' and all those other thrilling dime novels of my youth, have I been moved as I have, in reading your account of the hair's-breadth adventures of John the Scot. I feel sure that, under another name, you must have been the author of some of the immortal works I have just spoken of. With all respect, I must say that your John the Scot wrote very badly. All of my gentlemen heroes, Patsey, Jerry, Terry, Mike and O'Hoolihan, wrote a very handsome fist with the beautiful Cork slant. I shall be glad to procure specimens of their autographa for you at $100 per, and expenses. Telegraph orders at my charge.

Riverently and exuberantly yours

WM. R. THAYER

To Albert J. Beveridge

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *November* 3, 1920

DEAR BEV.

How do you feel on the morning after the Day of the Great Repudiation? It seems to me quite the most solemn political event that I have ever witnessed here, and I honor

you and all the others who worked to bring it about. Is it not also the greatest tribute to Theodore Roosevelt?

Now, my young warrior, it is up to you, and up to every other level-headed Republican, to put on the brakes and to prevent the hungry and grasping and fanatical Republicans from starting their orgy.

Aren't you coming East again before you settle down to hibernate in your little grey home in the West? Don't forget that I should like nothing better than to hear you analyze and prognosticate. . . .

To Henry Cabot Lodge

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *November* 5, 1920

DEAR SENATOR LODGE:

Congratulations to you, but for whom the diluvian victory of Tuesday would not have come about. I think, too, that T. R.'s articles and speeches from 1915 on, had their part in the result. The real purpose of the campaign, and the American people saw it, was to be rid forever of Wilson and Wilsonism. Don't allow the 'Old Guard' of the Republicans to imagine that the vote was to restore them, or their policy. If Root is too old to be Secretary of State, and I fear that he is, why wouldn't David J. Hill be the next best man? His articles in the *North American Review*, during the past year, have been remarkably effective — each a millstone hung round Wilson's neck. James M. Beck as ambassador to London, would be able, and would please many persons who aren't directly interested in the candidates of the Republican Machine.

Of course I assume that you yourself prefer to stay in the Senate rather than to go to the State Department or to London.

A Wilsonian assured me the other day, that, at a ban-

quet given Wilson in New York, just before he sailed on his first triumphal voyage to England, you had spoken words of commendation to him for going, and let him infer that the Republican Senators would welcome whatever Treaty he brought back. This seems to me incredible — a Cox lie — but I had no means of verifying. If you can send me a postal card with merely 'yes' or 'no' on it, I shall be much obliged, as I may wish to refer to the matter in a little epilogue to the Campaign, which I think of writing.

To Albert J. Beveridge

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *November* 19, 1920

DEAR BEV:

I intended to write you yesterday from New York where I went to attend the National Institute of Arts and Letters meeting, and particularly to see you elected a member. That I did, to my own great satisfaction and, I hope, not to your displeasure. If you had heard Rhodes and me eulogize you, you would have worn a double black veil to hide your blushes. The fact that you come from Indianapolis, the intellectual centre of the U.S., cut no ice. But the fact that two old men from Boston assured them that your 'John Marshall' is a *real* book, did the trick. One man knew you only by your political pamphlets, and said that he wouldn't vote for you on the strength of them, for the Institute or for any Club. So you see what a wise man you were when you chose Marshall as a smoke-screen to your past. . . .

To Henry van Dyke

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *November* 22, 1920

DEAR VAN DYKE:

Among my regrets after my intellectual spree in New York last week, was that of not having opportunity to talk

more with you. The truth is, that Gotham and all your Gothamites go at such a terrific speed, that we rustics can't keep up with it. When I feel properly humiliated by my lack, I remember that

> 'The gods approve
> The depth, and not the tumult, of the soul,'

and I slyly hope that there may be something worthy in us after all. I remember also that old Athens had nothing to compare with the danger of the crossing at Fifth Ave. and 42d St. — thank God! For even with five traffic policemen on the surface, and the sixth keeping watch from his aerial shanty, I always feel like a scared rabbit at that corner. . . . May I say, without flattery, that I regard your splendid Poem to France as the best poem written by any American since Lanier died? . . .

To Mrs. Frederic Crowninshield

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *December* 1, 1920

DEAR MRS. CROWNINSHIELD:

The beautiful painting has come. Bessie and I are delighted with it and send you our heartiest thanks. It seems to me a wonderful example of Fred's best work. I shall always prize it as his gift and as a reminder of his friendship, which was one of the great satisfactions of my later life.

Can you tell me just where the view is taken from? I haven't been in Capri — it surely is Capri — since 1886, so that I don't remember clearly. But the combination of verdure and gray rock, the light haze and the far off sea which once the sirens haunted are all characteristic. No wonder a man devotes his life to painting, if he can do work like this. . . .

The painting brings a lovely piece of my youth into the

house, and it will always be here, and lovely, though youth has long since flown.

To Henry van Dyke

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *December* 4, 1920

DEAR VAN DYKE:

Will you consider a mere note written by my Secretary's hand as any sort of an equivalent for your letter to me? . . .

Aren't you coming on to look after the souls of our young undergraduates who — shall I say flock, to Appleton Chapel?

There is so much propaganda in the air that I wish we could revive enthusiasm for Tennyson. You are best fitted to do it. Talking the other night with two Frenchmen who are here, it satisfied me to find out that they knew Tennyson's poems well, and regarded him, both for form and substance, as the supreme European poet of the last seventy or eighty years. How many of our *vers librists* would agree to that? Of course they don't read him at all, or they wouldn't write their stuff.[1]

To Henry W. Sprague

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *January* 5, 1921

DEAR HENRY:

You must think of me as a queer person. Two months ago I wrote you with almost hysterical urgency for points about California. We thought of spending four months from January 15 to May 15 on the Coast, and I was collecting all the information that I could. Your letter was far the best, so good indeed, and so enthusiastic that after

[1] In a letter to Van Dyke, September 20, 1921, Thayer has this to say of the Vers Librists: 'They have never *heard* Tennyson, or Keats, or Shelley or Milton, to know what rhythmic beauty is.'

reading it, I didn't feel that I needed to go there. In short, we gave up our proposed trip and shall not take it this year.

I have been reading William James's letters, and if you haven't seen them I advise you both to get them. They seem to me to be the best letters written by an American, and James is the most alert mind we have had. A Harvard student, he says, defined Algebra as 'a low form of cunning.' Can you beat that? I hope you have had a lovely Christmas. With grandchildren to enjoy it, a Christmas tree must recover its lost glamor for the elders. . . .

To Mrs. Douglas Robinson

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *January* 5, 1921

I judge from the meagre reports in the papers this morning, that the laying of the corner stone of your old home in 20th St., was impressive. My first thought is, 'If only Theodore himself could have given the address!'

I have so strong a belief in the desirability of perpetuating the memory of truly great men, that I rejoice at this Memorial to Theodore. It will be a shrine to which many visitors will go to have their ideals of Patriotism and Liberty, and of personal honor, renewed and strengthened.

I hope that the restorers of the building will keep all that they can of the old — the staircase down which you children ran in the morning, in your competition to get the seat by your father; the tessellated floor, and all the rest which Theodore has described. . . .

I have been looking through Bishop's book. Theodore's letters speak for themselves, but is not Bishop dull, or is it myself? He seems to me to bear the same relation to his subject that the leaden strips which hold together the sections of a vivid and splendidly colored stained-glass window bear to the stained glass.

W. R. Thayer in his Library
January, 1921

To Henry Holt

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *January* 20, 1921

DEAR HARRY:

. . . As for your question about a possible understudy for the *Review*, I know of nobody now, but I will inquire among the literary young men here. For twenty-three years I edited the *Harvard Graduates' Magazine* which is also a quarterly. We had the Harvard public to depend on, and yet, with all their College patriotism and class spirit, I think we never kept an average circulation of more than 4000 copies. Quarterlies get almost no support from advertising. The modern theory of the advertisers is, as you know, that you must hit as often as you can instead of once in three months. Now it really required as much editorial and technical knowledge (proof-reading, making-up, *etc.*) to run that small quarterly as it would have taken to run a monthly magazine like the *World's Work* or *Harper's*. But the salary, of course, was small, so small that if I had not had other means, I could not have lived on it.

I feel that *you* are really the *Unpartizan Review*. People read it to read your articles, and unless your understudy should be a particularly bright original person whose articles and point of view also attracted many, I wonder how the *Review* would thrive. This means, of course, that your job of editing it is cut out for a century or two. *Tant mieux.*

To Henry Osborn Taylor

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *January* 28, 1921

DEAR HARRY:

Your book came last evening, and I will leave it at the Tavern Club immediately. Arthur Pier also sent me a copy and insisted that I should review it for the *Graduates'*

Magazine. I told him that I should be happy to give both you and him pleasure (if it would), but that I am weighed down by my sense of ignorance. I know a little about some of the men and topics which you treat of, but I don't read the hog-Latin which they all wrote, nor can I spend four or five years trying, with one eye, to master it.

However, he thought that I would do, and so I am going to try to write some remarks on your book, if possible, in time for the March *Magazine*. As I turn the pages I marvel more and more at your wisdom; also at your ability to pack a great deal of thought into a few words. If you were not such a frisky young man in your intercourse with your fellow human beings I should be scared away from you by your learning. Really, Harry, I see, as far as I have been able merely to catch a glimpse of your book, that it will add greatly to your enviable reputation and be added also to the small number of those works of which America justly feels proud.

I wish I had time and strength to give you one of the old-fashioned sixty-page reviews, such as the *Quarterly* used to print, in which I should say nothing about what you have written, but assail you for omitting all mention of Tarradiddle, the great philosopher of Timbuctoo, 1475–1543; and I should find other similarly heinous omissions. Why have you left out Shoofly, the poet laureate of Kamchatka in 1550? But the brevity to which I am restricted, will save you from exposé of these and other evident defects. I am truly grateful to you for sending the copy.

Yours ever

Wm. R. Thayer

P.S. I send you a circular in regard to Ives's translation of Montaigne, in which I have been interested since he

began it, seven or eight years ago. Perhaps you will be interested, too.

To Henry Osborn Taylor

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *February* 8, 1921

The Editor of the *Transcript* has just telephoned to me that Barrett Wendell died this morning. As you know, he has been ill with pernicious anæmia for several months, and as there was no hope of recovery, I feel that the earlier he died, the less was the distress for him to suffer. My brother-in-law died of this disease two years ago, but he was a very strong man, and he lingered for two years. . . .

Truly, my dear man, my affection for you increases when you tell me that you care more for me than for 6½ starving Bulgarians. You do well to cherish them. In thirty years they may turn into 6½ or 6¾ buyers of your books, whereas long before that time, I shall have ceased to read any books on this side of the Great Divide, and shall either know much more or nothing about the mystery which we call Life. I wish that I could feel sure that the Future has in store for me, if I reach the cherubic state, a long, long afternoon with Leonardo da Vinci seated on a dry and comfortable cloud.

That reminds me, by the way, that I have recently read your chapter on him which seemed to me somehow not wholly satisfactory. Was it because your summing up of his many sides did not impress upon me how very great, how marvellous a creature he was! By dint of being read to, I finished my examination of your two volumes and sent a totally inadequate notice of them to Arthur Pier for the *Graduates' Magazine*. Of course, nobody is so well fitted as you are to understand the reviewer's incompetence, but Pier wished for the article, and I was only too

glad to do what he thought would be a service to you. I know a very little about three or four of the men you discuss, but I know an elephant when I see one, and you are an elephant of knowledge and scholarship, and you possess several qualities which I value higher than scholarship. My criticism was like a flight of gnats which settled on your hospitable back and have not yet been able to attract you by their bites. The only point that I really would insist on, is that in your next edition, you must not give your passages from Montaigne and the others in French, but must translate them in the text, and cite the originals in the footnotes if you think it necessary. You wouldn't quote from Averroës in Arabic. Why assume, therefore, that rustic youths in Cambridge must be able to read Montaigne in Sixteenth Century French?

What next? I shan't be content until you bring your drama of the European Mind down to its catastrophe in Napoleon and the French Revolution. You are built to be an octogenarian, so continue your task with confidence and alacrity.

To Harriet Amory

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *May* 1, 1921

I have clipt off the beginning of a letter from Ambassador Johnson, received yesterday, which will show you that *vous vous faites désirer à Rome*. So you belong to the company of ladies, from Zenobia down, whom the Eternal City has wanted to see. It will show you also with what engaging *abandon* great diplomats write to their friends. I told Mr. Johnson that if you went to Rome he would have to give up his official business and write sonnets to your eyebrow as long as you staid; and I judge that, in spite of his 68 years and white beard, he was eager to make

the trial. I believe his poetic result would surpass anything that younger singers might produce in your honor. . . .

So I am hoping to hear by your next letter that you and your mother have at last flown to the Tiber. Your anticipation is so keen that I must warn you against being disappointed. As I look back, I think it true that we found in a country just what we took to it. I am struck by the fact that your opinions on Spain tally exactly with mine. I wonder whether (when) you see the actual Italy, you will declare that most of us have been fooled by a mirage.

Do you remember the lines by Schiller?

'Der allein besitzt die Musen,
Der sie trägt im warmen Busen,
Dem Vandalen sind sie Stein.'

May 9. You'll think this letter drags its slow coil along like a rheumatic snake. There is so much in your letter which I want to refer to, that I won't begin; because I am due at the Harvard Overseers in five minutes, and see no spare time ahead for two days. . . .

I sent to you the other day a companion volume to the book of French Verse. Give it, please, to the young lady whose birthday is supposed to come about May 20th. If you can't find her, keep it yourself. I apologize for the binding — brown is a color I detest — the least poetical of all the colors. But I could get no other.

I hope you may be in Italy at this moment. That accomplished, come home to convince yourself that this is *your* country, your *home*, the best of all to live in.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, *June* 2, 1921

. . . We spent Sunday and Memorial Day down at Cobalt, Conn., near Middletown, with the Harry Taylors.

It's a beautiful country and they have a delightful place. He was a classmate of my brother Fred's in '78, and she is a sister of Charles Isham, '76 — charming people; he one of the chief scholars of America, full of fun and friskiness. . . .

Last night B. and I dined with Dr. and Mrs. Richard P. Strong, who live in an attractive new house opposite President Eliot. Did you meet him in your War work? I venerate him and Hoover as the two men who, during the War, did the most to mitigate and limit and counteract the horrors which the Kaiser hurled at mankind. Dr. Strong, you may remember, saved Serbia by delousing it, and later he discovered the cause of trench fever, and a remedy for it, and he worked indefatigably in the hospitals in France. Last evening John Sargent was also at the dinner, and two or three other pleasant people.

Now the excitements and fatigues of Class Day begin to loom up. But where is the enthusiasm of twenty years with which we once enjoyed them. Do you realize that the Class of '81 celebrates its fortieth year at Commencement? Don't love us less because we have become patriarchs, but pity us.

To James Geddes

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *June* 12, 1921

Thank you for sending me the copy of the 'New England Modern Language Association,' with your very kind reference to me. Of course, since I became half-blind, I have been unable to read much myself, and I have found nobody who could read Italian to me so that I could understand it. Accordingly, the little I have of Dante dates from an earlier time. But how much Grandgent has done, and how fresh he seems!

I hope you plan for a summer that will bring you real rest — but I doubt if you know what rest means.

To Mrs. Michael Foster

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *June* 25, 1921

. . . Did you ever hear that in C. E. Norton's old age he did or said something which caused excitement? The *Globe* sent a reporter by express train and stage-coach, to ask him what he intended to do about it. Norton received him graciously, and said, 'Why, I am going to cultivate my garden.' The *Globe* printed in large headlines 'Norton intends to take up gardening.' And I suspect that the canny C. E. N. enjoyed having mystified the *Globe* by the quotation from Voltaire's *Candide*. Of course the *Globe* couldn't be expected to know anything about that. . . .

To Mrs. Michael Foster

MAGNOLIA, MASS., *September* 6, 1921

Your dear letter from Liverpool on August 21st gave me much satisfaction. Of course I never supposed that you had not long ago thought it out about Death. Nor had I any doubt about your readiness. I have a vision of you soaring up Sunny Bank in the motor, and disappearing into the sky, while we unworthy mortals plodded up on foot, and scant of breath, after you — and I felt as I thought the bystanders must have felt when they watched Elijah vanish into heaven. And I assure you that his long, patriarchal beard was not a whit more enticing than your angelic smile.

I agree with you as to the beauty and tonic quality of Walt Whitman's apostrophes to Death. For myself, I am not afraid of the Hereafter — but the thought of its possible loneliness and friendlessness sometimes gives me a

pang — and I dread lest, at the moment of passage, I may skulk or whimper, which my *soul* would never do. But this poor human flesh of ours is so frail — and often refuses to obey the soul. . . .[1]

Speaking of high society and Our Betters, we are just finishing Lytton Strachey's 'Queen Victoria,' a real masterpiece. I never expected to see such a candid book come out of England. And it is so bright, so penetrating. Strachey's self-restraint in not rubbing in his sarcasm adds to its *bite*. When Bernard Shaw indulges in irony he stops and applauds himself and tells the reader to realize what a damned scintillating genius he, Shaw, is. . . .

Dear Judge Jerry Smith has gone at 84. He was among the three or four men in these last four years whom I really cared for.

In 1921 Thayer began work upon a short life of Washington, the last book he was to write.[2] He had long been attracted to the subject and he desired to see what he could do with it. He was well aware that an elaborate biography was out of the question, owing to the incapacity from which he suffered which precluded long and critical research. He must cut his garment according to the cloth. But that was no reason for abandoning the idea and Thayer had never been a man to quail before difficulties.

[1] Among Mr. Thayer's papers the following lines, written several years earlier, have been found:

MY PRAYER

1905

I ask not that the blows be spar'd;
I would endure, or die:
I only ask that what my soul has dar'd
My flesh may not deny.

[2] Published in 1922.

His mood is revealed in the following extract from a letter which he wrote to his friend Beveridge on October 20, 1921:

'Thanks for those points about the Washington book. I already realize that it is audacious even to think of it, and I am afraid that after I once begin it systematically I shall find myself swamped by the material, or my eye will give out. But I hope there is a sporting chance of my being able to do something. Probably I shall never arrive at publishing, but that won't matter. The world has already a hundred thousand or so excellent books which are never read; so it won't feel any loss if mine doesn't get into print.'

To Mrs. J. D. Cameron

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *November* 28, 1921

DEAR MRS. CAMERON:

I am very gratified to you for your long letter which reached me a month ago. I must apologize for my delay in replying, but my only apology is a shameful one — indolence. And yet my mind has been futilely active, revolving thoughts which lead to nothing.

I can't help feeling sorry that you did not carry out your plan of coming over last summer so that we could work together over Henry Adams's letters.

My oculist tells me that my 'good' eye is in excellent condition, but he adds that if I take the voyage to Europe and run upon sea-sickness, I shall be in danger of losing my sight. There is much I wish to see in Europe. I wish to say 'goodbye' to the dear Italian places — how strange it seems to think that in a few years at most I shall be setting off for a world in which there will be no Italy — and I wish especially to be able to do this Henry Adams work for you. But I confess that I still shrink from taking the risk.

Blindness is so terrible, and it would reduce me to the condition of a helpless nuisance to my family.

You probably would take the risk — women are so much braver than men — but!

I had a quiet and unproductive summer on the North Shore, and if I knew anything about the subject I should infer that old age has crossed my threshold. I enjoyed very much your letter and the too brief account it gave of yourself, and the details it gave about the conditions of England. We follow the Washington Conference very eagerly, and everyone is agreed that Secretary Hughes has made a fine start. . . .

My chief pleasure lately has been in seeing Marshal Foch, a great man if ever there was one, whom our people have been doing their best to kill with kindness after their fashion, keeping him on the go for twelve or fourteen hours a day, giving him two or three LL.D. degrees and five full meals a day, and expecting half a dozen or more speeches from him. I wonder whether he sometimes regrets the comparative tranquility of campaigning. . . .

To Elizabeth Cutting

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *December* 2, 1921

I am glad you can find room for my article,[1] because I feel strongly that I must do what little is in my power to prevent the corruption of our national stock through the further immigration of polluted individuals and strains. Should you need to curtail at all, perhaps you would find that some of the quotation from Professor Ward could go, although I hate to cut him down, for he is the ablest and the most conscientious of all those who are fighting against our national pollution.

[1] 'Throwing Away Our Birthright,' *North American Review*, February, 1922.

I wish I were able to visit New York as often as attractive invitations come from there. There's the dinner to the British Delegates next Monday, for instance, but I can't afford it for one reason, and my head won't stand it for another. I feel that a quiet Bostonian needs to be acclimated to New York, just as the workmen in the caissons have to be put through a regulated course in order to be prevented from succumbing to the 'bends.'

My daughter, on the other hand, finds your New York atmosphere most exhilarating. Such is the difference between age and youth.

To H. Nelson Gay

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *December* 14, 1921

. . . Where have you heard, *Caro mio*, the rumor that the Thayers are bound for Rome in the autumn of 1922? I wish we were. We talk much about it, and hope it will come to pass, but the same is true of our feeling towards Heaven; however, I am mightily afraid that I shall set off for Heaven first. Of course, you will never know whether I get there or not. At the present moment I should prefer Italy, if I could see it with the eyes, and health, and emotions with which I saw it years ago, but I have these no more; and the fact that a trip to Europe for me now must involve running the risk of losing my only good eye, acts as a strong deterrent to my going. I have come near enough to blindness in the past six years to make me shrink from taking the risk. Nothing that I could see there now, not even Venice, would compensate for unbroken darkness during the rest of my life. Of course, in the routine of every day I try to imagine that I am as well provided as Argus was, and I try not to think of the eye question at

all; but when it comes to planning for a trip abroad, I can't help looking the chances squarely in the face....

To John Jay Chapman

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *January* 6, 1922

DEAR JACK:

Thank you very truly for your note. I don't want you to exaggerate my performances. My present flight after Washington is merely a piece of bravado. I feel very unsure, whether even if I live to finish it, it will be worth publishing, for during this last year something, which I feel very sure is that old fellow Senectus, has got inside of me and can't be dislodged. Everything seems changed. Sensations don't register as they used to do. Emotions speak like phantom voices far away, and not quite definite. Before I came to college I had a tutor who lost his arm at Petersburg. He told me that occasionally he felt in the stump all the feeling, and vigor, and desire for activity, which a normal arm could feel. Do you suppose that Old Age will gradually amputate our real selves, until we are reduced to only the shadows of remembrance? I shall be sixty-three next week. Will there be any "come-back" after the Great Climacteric? I do not care how soon the quietus come if it will save me from being a nuisance to my family and a moping distress to myself. Pain is so futile. Gather ye rosebuds while ye may, oh jocund youths.

To Ferris Greenslet

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *April* 12, 1922

DEAR FERRIS:

Here is my 'George Washington,' as far as finished. I doubt not that your eagle eye will perceive what I have tried to do, to wit: make a human living portrait of the

man who has been dehumanized since the beginning. I want the reader to see him, as I see him, a great, vigorous, self-contained and self-controlled man. An athlete stripped for whatever conflict fate may present to him. Lithe and sinewy to act and with a great store of endurance.

You will notice that I have quoted freely from his letters because I believe that nothing else could give so well the *quality* of the man — And by presenting his very words, I increase the pertinence of his views to our present needs. Let me know your opinion on this effort; don't be misled into thinking that since the Life is outwardly frail it has not been duly considered. I had many temptations to digress into 'eloquent' passages, but I resisted them all because I felt that simplicity and insistence on the fundamental qualities would best represent Washington. . . .

To Poultney Bigelow

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *November*, 1922

DEAR POULTNEY:

Alas! Alas! I was told by one of the maids, on Monday afternoon, you called here and would not come in because you found that some one was with me at the time. Never leave for that reason, for I can always see two persons at a time. Never do that again.

I heard that at the Tavern you shone with your renowned refulgent beams, too seldom now refulging here or elsewhere. I received from the Japan Club an invitation to dine with you that evening, but as it reached me after the dinner was over I could not enjoy it. Better luck next time: I hope you will come on here again during the winter, and then we shall have a real meeting.

In 1902 Thayer had been made by the Italian Government Knight of the Order of the Crown of Italy. In 1917 he had been made Knight of the Order of Saints Maurizio and Lazzaro, an order conferred by the King of Italy upon persons distinguished in public service, in science and arts and letters.

In 1919 he received the honor, very rare in the case of foreigners, of election to membership in the *Accademia dei Lincei*, the highest scholarly distinction that could come to him in the domain he had so signally enriched, that of Italian studies. In 1922 he was made Commendatore of the Order of the Crown of Italy of the highest rank allotted to civilians.

To Charles F. Thwing

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, *November* 6, 1922

DEAR CHARLES:

This is the day after Guy Fawkes's Day, a dark, cheerless occasion. You might suppose that the meteorology was bent on making everything so dreary that nobody would care to progress much farther on these lines. I feel that I owe you many letters of thanks which I repay as lavishly as I can.

Were we 40 years younger I should try to entice you to one of the Billiard Parlors in Harvard Square, and let you know what dizzy heights of wickedness you can expatiate on among those denizens of real vice. But I desist because I believe that you are impervious to the early or the late temptations.

I think I told you that my doctor has had the temerity to put my poor old head together. Whether he is going to succeed or not nobody knows. I admire the audacity. If he succeeds I suppose I shall know. If he doesn't no

one will know or care. But this is rather a morbid point of view even for an afternoon like today, and I will not press it.

I have been startled and pleased just now to receive word that the King of Italy has made me a Commendatore of the highest rank allotted to civilians. It is a real honor, and I shall do my best to be worthy of it. After all these *disjecta membra* which come to us unsought, and unexpected, have their pleasant side. They don't mean too much. They aren't large enough to stir any man's cupidity or envy. So I wish that you may have a large plumcake full of them at your next Christmasing. And I wish above all things that you and your Mary may consume your next batch with the tart but true Thayers.

Yours forever

Wm. R. Thayer

Such are the letters of William Roscoe Thayer. They present, in its essential features, the biography of the man. What he aspired to be, what he attempted to do and what he did, what he thought of men and of events, what books and pictures and music and friends meant to him are revealed as in a mirror with great fidelity and simplicity. No affectation, no pose, no pretensions nor mannerisms stand between him and his reader, tending to impede the light, to distort or disturb the picture. Instead, sincerity, naturalness shine forth from every page he wrote.

Idealism, frankness, honesty, courage are certainly revealed as characteristics of the man. And heroism too. As his fellows of the Tavern Club were later to say, 'it is difficult to speak of his last years without a catch of the breath,' for it was then that Thayer faced the possibility of blindness, a fearful fate for any man, and above

all for a scholar to whom eyes are the requisite, the prerequisite, the imperative instruments of his profession, of his very life. During these years the editor of these letters saw much of Thayer and can testify that heroism, so firm, so quiet, so complete, in the daily and hourly apprehension of a fate so dreadful, is rarely encountered in this world. If any one should suffer, Thayer was evidently resolved that he alone should be the one. Cruelly maimed and incapacitated by the loss of one eye, he was intent that his friends should hear no word of complaint. They heard indeed from him only humorous references to Polyphemus, Argus, Cocles, and amusing descriptions of how the world and its inhabitants and objects appear to one whose vision is affected. Thayer had need of all the resources of his spirit in confronting the hard realities and the still harder possibilities of his affliction. But if he had need of them, he had them all, and in wonderful control.

Death came, after a long illness, to this gentle and intrepid spirit in the early morning of September 7, 1923, in the home in Cambridge. Four days later the funeral service was held in Appleton Chapel. In accordance with his wishes his body was cremated and the ashes were buried in Mount Auburn Cemetery.

From the sheaf of tributes which followed one extract may be made. In the Massachusetts Historical Society, where he had long played his part, his friend and classmate, Dr. George A. Gordon, said:

'The quiet romance of the scholar's life, its joyous industry, its fruitful toil, its exalted companionships, its lasting saving grace, all were a part of Mr. Thayer's existence. We knew him in one of the happiest of homes, as one of the friendliest of men; at the same time we knew him as a heroic servant of truth and duty, as a high militant spirit,

as a happy warrior who, having fought the beautiful fight, has won a soldier's rest.'

It may be that his personality is best expressed in the closing lines of Tennyson's 'Ulysses' which he often repeated and which seemed to run through his mind as a constant undertone:

'Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.'

INDEX

Throughout the index *T.* stands for the writer of the letters. For references to passages dealing with the writing of the lives of Cavour, Hay, Roosevelt, and Washington, see Thayer, William Roscoe, *His Works*, under the respective titles.

Abbott, John S. C., his *Life of Napoleon*, 170.

Abbott, Lyman, 170, 293.

Accademia dei Lincei, *T.* elected a member of, 416.

Adams, Brooks, 273, 354.

Adams, Charles Francis, on *T.* and the Harvard Union, 106; *T.*'s talks with on shipboard, 130, 131; his attacks on various fetishes, etc., 144, 145; and the Elective System, 156; his Autobiography, 281; mentioned, 225, 242, 245, 250, 273, 344, 353. *Letters to*, 140, 141, 143, 145, 146, 147, 149, 151, 152, 154, 155, 157, 158.

Adams, Charles F., 2d., 281, 344.

Adams, Henry, *The Education of Henry Adams*, 225, 320, 336, 353; *Mont St. Michel and Chartres*, 226, 271, 320; and the authorship of *Democracy*, 250, 350 and *n.*, 351, 354; *T.* urges him to publish the *Education*, 250, 251, 266, 271, 276; his *Tahiti*, 251, 269; Hay's relations with, 265; and Hay's policy as Secretary of State, 272, 273; *T.* urges him to write of 'Henry Adams and his Friends,' 273; his 80th birthday, 319, 320; his professorship at Harvard, 320, 321; his novels, 336, 351; his death, 336; *T.* writes of his *Esther*, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355; sales of *Democracy* and *John Randolph*, 359; his letters, 411; mentioned, 231, 235, 242, 245, 248, 281, 303, 317, 343, 344, 345, 374. *Letters to*, 224, 250, 265, 267, 269, 271, 319.

Adams, Mrs. Henry, 250.

Adams, Samuel, *T.*'s verses on, 97 and *n.*

Adamses, the, 'persistence of superiority' in, 154.

Adee, A. A., 243.

Aitken, Mrs., 86.

Albert, Prince, 185.

Alderman, Edwin A., 386.

Aldrich, Thomas B., 66.

Alibi Club, 289.

Allard, Louis, 180.

Allen, Frederick, *Letter to*, 3.

Allen, Joseph, 370.

American Academy of Arts and Sciences, *T.* a member of, 380 *n.*

American Historical Association, Roosevelt's presidential address, 209; *T.* president of, 360; *T.*'s presidential address (1919), 382; mentioned, 120, 163.

American Rights League, meeting at Carnegie Hall, 293, 349.

Americans, attitude of, toward the War, 232, 237, 247, 248, 278; and the sinking of the *Lusitania*, 249.

Amory Harriet, *Letter to*, 406.

Anglo-Saxons, moral degeneration of, 114.

Appleton, Sumner, 347.

Apthorp, Harrison O., visits Europe with *T.*, 41 ff., 65, 76; his hostility to German manners, etc., 43–45; mentioned, 54, 205, 263, 264. *Letters to*, 28, 30, 31.

Arabic, torpedoed, 255.

Armistice, the, 348, 349.

Army titles, prevalence of, 311, 312.

Arnold, Matthew, *Literature and Dogma*, 60; mentioned, 153.

Asquith, Herbert H., *T.*'s impression of, 202, 238.

Atlantic Monthly, 56 *n.*, 66 and *n.*,

69, 97 *n.*, 98, 99, 171 and *n.*, 302, 344 *n.*
Averroës, 406.
Azan, Paul J. L., 300

Bacon, Robert, 276.
Bailey, Philip J., *Festus*, 19.
Baker, Newton D., 322.
Balfour, Arthur J. (Earl), 297, 298, 301, 315.
Baring, Evelyn, Lord Cromer, 283.
Bayreuth, Wagner festival at, 43.
Beck, James M., 280, 293, 307, 308, 366.
Bed, Buns & Beer, 43–45.
Beerbohm, Max, *A Christmas Garland*, 209.
Belgians, Deportation of, 288.
Benedek, Ludwig von, 179.
Benson, Godfrey R., Lord Charnwood, his *Lincoln*, 319, 331, 339.
Bergson, Henri, 211.
Berlioz, Hector, *Damnation of Faust*, 29.
Bernstorff, Count von, 246, 255, 307.
Bethman-Hollweg, Herr von, 233.
Beveridge, Albert J., his *Life of John Marshall*, 374, 399; receives Pulitzer prize for biography, 392; mentioned, 340, 382, 393. *Letters to*, 385, 386, 392, 394, 397, 399, 411.
Beyle, Marie H. (De Stendhal), *Promenade dans Rome*, 76.
Biancheri, Giuseppe, *T.*'s interview with, about Cavour, 124, 125, and other men of his day, 125, 136.
'Big business,' *T.*'s views on, and on the necessity of preventing it from dominating the government, 389; Roosevelt and, 389.
Bigelow, Melville M., 157.
Bigelow, Poultney, *Prussian Memories*, 262; *Genseric*, 334. *Letters to*, 254, 262, 334, 348, 415.
Bigelow, W. Sturgis, 250.
Biographies that *T.* was asked to write, list of, 283 and *n.*
Biography, *T.* on the art of, 275, 379; not taught in American colleges, 331; *T.* lectures on, 382.
Bishop, Joseph B., his 'official' biography of Roosevelt, 363, 364, 402.
Bismarck, Count Otto von, life of, 55; *T.* writes essay on, 56 and *n.*; and Cavour, *T.*'s paper on, at Milan, 148 and *n.*; mentioned, 205, 233, 234, 236, 312, 313, 321.
Blaine, James G., *T.* opposed to nomination of, 28, and bolts, 229; Hay's support of, 250; Roosevelt's decision to support him, 365.
Blake, William, 68, 202.
Blanchard, Professor, 299, 300.
Blok, E., 124.
Boers, British bullying of, 112, 114.
Bomba. *See* Ferdinand II.
Boston *Globe*, C. E. Norton and, 409.
Boston *Herald*, 343.
Boston Police strike, 376.
Boston *Evening Transcript*, editor of, decorated by Italy, 390; mentioned, 15, 334 *n.*, 336, 351.
Boston *Sunday Budget*, *T.* contributes to, 25.
Braille, *Life of Hay* transcribed into, for the blind, 280 and *n.*
Brofferio, Angelo, 125.
Brooks, Phillips, and the succession to A. P. Peabody at Harvard, 19, 20; his death and character, 81, 82.
Brown University, *T.* receives LL.D. from, 211, 212, 214; *T.* lectures at, 359.
Browning, Robert, death of, 67; *T.*'s estimate of his work and influence, 68.
Brunetière, Ferdinand, 153.
Bruno, Giordano, *T.*'s paper on, 66, 69; Ferrari's statue of, 121, 122.
Bryan, William J., 'queers' Wilson's policy, 230, 231; *T.*'s description of, 293; mentioned, 236, 279.
Bryce, James, Viscount, *Biographical Studies*, 130; mentioned, 99, 123, 172 and *n.*, 192, 283, 379.
Buchanan, James, Wilson compared with, 269.
Bülow, Hans Guido von, 62.
Burne-Jones, Sir E., 202.
Burney, Fanny, *Evelina*, 69.

Burr, Anna Robeson, her various works, 395.
Byron, George Gordon, Lord, 205, 259.

Cabot, Hugh, 362.
Caine, T. H. Hall, Meredith's *mot* on, 168.
Calderon de la Barca, Pedro, 24, 39.
California, University of, *T.* applies for professorship at, 64; but fails to receive it, 65.
Cambridge, Mass., *T.* settles in, for life, 49; 275th anniversary of founding of, 162, 163; celebration of signing of the Armistice in, 347.
Cameron, Mrs. J. Donald, and the *Life of Hay*, 272; her collection of letters, 273, 274; her daughter's death for France, 337. *Letters to*, 272, 280, 284, 336, 343, 411.
Campidoglio, the, 122, 123.
Capri, 129.
Carlyle, Jane Welsh, 77.
Carlyle, Thomas, *Life of Mirabeau*, 24; *T.* assists Norton in making selection from his letters, 76, 77, 85, 86; revelations of the letters as to his character, 77; his *Life of Sterling*, 85; mentioned, 69.
Carnavalet Museum (Paris), 204.
Cash, Miss, 132, 133.
Castle, William R., Jr., 257.
Cavour, Camillo, Count di, *T.*'s first knowledge of, 15; *T.* begins to think of writing his life, 16, 52; collecting material for the life of, 65, 66; statue of, in Rome, 121; Biancheri's reminiscences of, 124, 125; and Garibaldi, 124; King Victor Emanuel on, 126; and Bismarck, *T.*'s paper on, 148 and *n.*; A. D. White's papers on, 171 and *n.*; his enduring fame, 194; his country place at Santena, 196, 197, 206; *T.*'s feeling with regard to him when the work was finished, 183, 210, 291; and John Morley, 326; mentioned, 368.
Cecil, Robert, Marquis of Salisbury, 315.
Celtic Revival, the, 186.
Cervantes, Miguel de, Lowell's course on his *Don Quixote*, 38, 39.
Cesaresco, Count, 114, 167, 179.
Cesaresco, Countess Evelyn M., her books on Italy, 110; *T.*'s enduring friendship with, 110; *T.*'s account of her life and career, 110 *n.*; her paper on Vittoria Accoramboni, 118 and *n.*; her book on Cavour, 115; and *T.*, in Rome, 128; *The Place of Animals*, etc., 178 and *n.*; mentioned, 161, 167, 201. *Letters to*, 2, 110, 112, 113, 114, 117, 118, 178, 181, 197, 199, 216.
Chamberlain, Austen, 202.
Chapman, John Jay, *Victor Chapman's Letters from France*, 282 *n.*, 301, 304; his *May, 1917* (poem), 302 and *n.*; his *Ode on the Sailing of our Troops*, 303, 304; his misconception of *T.*'s *Cavour*, 305. *Letters to*, 282, 301, 303, 304, 414.
Chapman, Victor E., death of, 282 and *n.*, 301, 302.
Charnwood, Lord. *See* Benson.
Chavannes, M., 205.
Chester, England, 199.
Chicago, 66.
Child, Francis J., 141.
Chillon, Castle of, 205, 206.
Choate, Joseph H., death of, 297, 298; mentioned, 231.
Circolo Italiano (Boston), 114.
Class of 1856, Semi-Centennial Report of, 148.
Class of 1879, 109.
Class of 1880, *T.* suggests endowment of a professorship in Government by, 109.
Class of 1881, 18 and *n.*
Clemenceau, Georges, 329, 339, 387.
Colonna, Prince Prospero, 123.
Comparetti, Signor, 124.
Conciergerie, the (Paris), 204.
Condorcet, Marquis de, 367.
Congress of the U.S., tries to 'down' Wilson, 276; and the War, 307; passes the 18th Ammendment, 316. *See* Senate.
Constitution of the U.S., 18th Amendment, *T.*'s comment on, 316.

Coolidge, Archibald C., 140.
Coolidge, Calvin, and the Boston police strike, 376; mentioned, 390, 394.
Coolidge, Charles A., 32.
Coolidge, Isabella, *Letter to*, 32.
Coquelin, Jean, 57.
Cornell University, *T.* declines professorship at, 53; A. D. White's administration of, 176; *T.* lectures at, 216; its advantages, 218.
Corona d'Italia, Order of. *See* Crown of Italy.
Corot, Jean B. C., 204.
Cram, Ralph A., 333.
Crane, Enoch, and Co., 3.
Crawford, F. Marion, 168.
Crimson, The (Harvard), 18.
Crispi, Francesco, 305, 312.
Cromer, Lord. *See* Baring.
Cross, Arthur L., *History of England*, 247. *Letters to*, 192, 247.
Crothers, Samuel M., 191, 209, 343, 371.
Crown of Italy, *T.* a Knight, 93, 416, and Commendatore of the Order of, 416, 417.
Crowninshield, Frederic, as painter, 400; mentioned, 374. *Letters to*, 226, 238, 240.
Crowninshield, Mrs. Frederic, *Letter to*, 400.
Cunningham, H. W., 147.
Curtis, Edwin U., and the Boston police strike, 376.
Curzon, George, Marquis, 269, 317.
Cushing, Harvey W., 297.
Cushman, Charlotte, *T.* quoted on, 7, 8, 11.
Cutting, Elizabeth, *Letter to*, 412.

Damrosch, Leopold, 29.
Dante Alighieri, Whitman on, 35; Norton's interpretation of, 38, and Lowell's, 40, 41.
Dante Society of Cambridge, 39-41, 114.
Darwin, Charles R., Whitman on., 35; mentioned, 30, 86.
Davel, Major, Swiss patriot, 206.
Davis, Jefferson, 387.
De Amicis, Edmondo, 167.
De Normandie, James, 157.
Defoe, Daniel, *Robinson Crusoe*, 130.
Delano, Frederic A., his daughters, 241.
Democratic National Convention (1884), *T.*'s hopes of, 31.
Depew, Chauncey M., 203.
Dickens, Charles, *T.* on his qualities as a writer, 10.
Dictation habit, the, 258, 259.
Dijon, tombs of, Burgundian princes at, 197.
Disraeli, Benjamin (Earl of Beaconsfield), Carlyle's description of, 85; mentioned, 39.
Dixey, Richard, 239.
Dobson, Austin, 73.
Doubleday, F. N., *Letters to*, 356, 371.
Dow, Gerard, 204.
Dresden, 43.
Dunbar, Charles F., 101, 159.
Dunham, Carroll, 280, 332.

Edinburgh Castle, 200.
Edward VII, his entry into Rome, 128.
Edward, Prince of Wales, creates a fine impression in the U.S., 380.
Elective System, the, attacked by C. F. Adams and defended by *T.*, 145, 146, 147, 151; *T.*'s paper on, 151, 152.
Eliot, Charles W., notifies *T.* that his appointment as instructor will not be renewed, 63; recommends him for professorship at University of California, 64; *T.*'s article on, printed in the *World's Work* (1904), 101, 103 *n.*; C. F. Adams's portrait of, 151; his 40th anniversary as President, 159; comes out for Wilson in 1916, 286; mentioned, 53, 84, 99, 105, 120, 147, 155, 156, 172, *n.*, 372, 390.
Eliot, George. *See* Evans, Mary Ann.
Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 30, 69, 73, 75, 79, 153.
Endicott, William, 264, 307, 340.
England, affairs in (1906), 150; sale of *Cavour* in, 191; suffering in (1912), 196; effect of her entrance into the War, 233, 234, 235; misunderstanding of American attitude toward the

War in, 247, 248; her achievement in the War, 329, 330.
English, the, conservatism of, 196, 197.
Europe, visits to (1886), 41, 42, (1888), 65, (1891), 76, (1912), 195 ff.; *T.* on events in (1906), 150.
Evans, Mary Ann (George Eliot), *Adam Bede*, 24.
Everett, William, *T.*'s judgment of his fitness as orator at Milton's tercentenary, 153, 154, and *n.*

Faguet, Emile, 153.
Ferdinand II, King of the Two Sicilies, 171.
Ferrari, Ettore, his statue of Bruno, 121, 122.
Ferrero, Guglielmo, *T.*'s estimate of, 154; his Lowell lectures, 154.
Feudalism, the last stand of, 233.
Fish, Frederick P., 320.
Fiske, John, death of, 91; *T.*'s appreciation of, 91, 92, mentioned, 99, 100, 131.
'Five of Hearts,' 250.
Foch, Ferdinand, *T.*'s poem on, 341; a great man, 412; mentioned, 339, 346.
Fogazzaro, Antonio, 167.
Forbes, Edward W., 160.
Forbes, W. Cameron, *Letters to*, 159, 194, 289.
Forbes-Robertson, Johnstone, 279.
Ford, Worthington C., *Letters to*, 220, 234, 235, 373.
Forster, John, 86.
Forum, The, 99.
Foster, George Michael, marries Mrs. Margaret (Swan) Russell, 132; mentioned, 302, 303.
Foster, Margaret (Swan), her war-work, 303. *Letters to, see* Thayer, William Roscoe, under *Letters*.
France, suffering in (1912), 196; *T.* favors sending an expedition to (1917), 296.
Frederick the Great, 321.
French officers at Harvard, 310.
Frothingham, Paul R., 318, 321.
Froude, J. A., 86.
Furness, Horace H., *T.*'s friendship with, 88; death of, 198, 206; mentioned, 70 *n.*, 172 *n.* *Letters to*, 88, 89.
Furness, Mrs. Horace H., 206.
Furness, William H., 88 and *n.*, 89.

Galletti, sculptor of Cavour statue, 121.
Gardner, Augustus P., 289.
Garfield, Harry A., 212.
Garibaldi, Giuseppe, statue of, in Rome, 120, 121; and Cavour, 124, 125; mentioned, 181, 182, 198, 221, 227, 368.
Garibaldi, Riciotti, 128.
Garrison, Wendell P., 84, 162.
Gaston, William A., 109.
Gay, H. Nelson, assists *T.* in his work on Cavour, 161, 165; *T.*'s friendship with, 173. *Letters to, see* Thayer, William Roscoe, under *Letters*.
Geddes, James, *Letter to*, 408.
George V, 195.
German manners and customs, burlesque description of, 43–45.
German propagandists in the U.S., 246.
German Reichstag, 150.
Germans, their third drive (May, 1918), 331.
Germany, *T.*'s idea of result of victory of, 233, 234; Wilson breaks off relations with, 290; her unconditional surrender, 349; should be forced to make full restitution, 387, 388.
Gifford, William, 153.
Gilder, Richard W., 172 *n.*
Ginn & Co., 70.
Giolitti, Signor, 174.
Gladstone, William E., 39.
Gobineau, Comte J. A. de, 234.
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, *T.*'s estimate of, 30.
Gordon, George A., his address on *T.* to the Mass. Historical Society, 418, 419; mentioned, 153, 288.
Gracie, Archibald, 158.
Grandgent, Charles H., 408.

Grant, Robert, *Convictions of a Grandfather*, 195; *Law and the Family*, 377, 378. *Letters to*, 193, 195, 256, 377, 391.
Grant, Ulysses S., 341.
Graz, Austria, 15.
Great Repudiation, the (election of 1920), 397, 398.
Green, Samuel A., 157.
Greene, E. B., 361.
Greenslet, Ferris, 276. *Letter to*, 414.
Grey, Sir Edward (Viscount), 238.
Griscom, Lloyd C., 177.
Guicciardini, Countess, 123.
Guild, Curtis, 177.

Hafiz, *T.* on his poetry, 61, 62.
Haines, Edith (Key), *T.*'s niece, 326.
Hallowell, John W., 329.
Harding, Benjamin F., 30. *Letter to*, 42.
Harding, Warren G., nominated for President (1920), *T.*'s characterization of, 394.
Harnack, Adolf, 236.
Harper's Magazine, chapters of *John Hay* printed in, 258.
Harrison, Frederic, in Cambridge, 112, 113; his *William the Silent*, 124; mentioned, 123.
Hart, Albert B., 109, 149.
Harte, F. Bret, 114, 115.
Harvard Advocate, The, 18.
Harvard Graduates' Magazine founded with *T.* as editor, 78 and *n.*, 79, 81; *T.*'s editorship of, 84, 90, 95 ff., 105, 137, 139, 155, 156, 159, 160; article criticizing Yale in, 142–144, 147, 162; *T.*'s paper on the Elective System in, 151, 152; 'Eliot Number' of, 159; commemoration of Norton's 80th birthday in, 172 and *n.*; *T.* resigns as editor of (1915), 256 *n.*; its value to Harvard, 257; *T.*'s policy as editor, 257; mentioned, 6, 7, 50 *n.*, 70 *n.*, 403, 404, 405.
Harvard men listed as on war duty, number of, 308, 309.
Harvard Regiment, the, 300.
Harvard Stadium, 109.
Harvard Union, *T.* the 'father' of, 105, 106; dedication of, 106, 107.
Harvard University, *T.*'s course at, 16 ff.; *T.* a graduate student at, 37; *T.* serves one year as instructor in English at, 54 ff., but is not reappointed, 63; *T.* writes an historical sketch of, 69, 70 and *n.*, 72, 73; plan for a weekly newspaper at, 70, 71; abandoned, 72; *T.*'s interest in, 105; cosmopolitanism of, 115; gives Prince Henry an LL.D., 116; represented by *T.* at Congress of Historical Sciences in Rome, 120; Adams's plans for 'Oxfordisation' of, 144, 145, 151, 152; athleticism at, and the Overseers, 150; *T.* elected Overseer of, 211, 217, and receives LL.D. from, 211, 212, 214, 215, 217; loss of students at, in 1917, 307; her efforts to train students militarily, 308; her great contribution to military effectiveness, 310; the 'Cold Roast Boston crowd' at, 393; Commencement of 1920, 396; *T.* reëlected Overseer, 396. *See* Class of 1856, etc., Elective System, Milton.
Hay, John, Secretary of State, 120; *T.* conceives the plan of writing the life of, 219, 220; *T.*'s estimate of, 220, 221, 222; he seeks light concerning, 222; 'a very engaging subject,' 227, 374; and the authorship of *Democracy*, 248; *The Bread-Winners*, 248, 249; was he a snob? 251; his policy as Secretary of State, and H. Adams, 272; his diplomatic triumphs, 273; his politics and Adams's, 273; mentioned, 259, 317, 337, 345.
Hay, Mrs. John, 219, 222, 224, 225, 258, 269.
Hay-Pauncefote Treaty, 245.
Hazen, Charles D., 244, 245. *Letters to*, 252, 254, 270, 361, 365, 366, 367, 368, 377, 383, 386, 388.
Hazen, Mrs. Charles D., 244, 253.
Heaven, an editor's life in, 160.
Helena, Queen of Italy, 123.
Hendrick, Burton J., *Life and Letters of W. H. Page*, 98.

Henry, Prince of Prussia, his visit to the U.S., 115, 116.
Herndon, William H., his stories of Lincoln, 339, 341, 342.
Higginson, Henry L., and the Harvard Union, 106, 107.
Higginson, Thomas W., 172 *n.*
Hill, David J., 289, 381, 398.
Hill, Don G., 14.
Historians, status of, in the U.S., and in France and England, 191.
History, in American colleges, 191, 192.
Hodges, George, 325.
Hofmann, Josef, his precocious genius, 54.
Holland, Rupert S., *Letter to*, 256.
Holleben, Baron von, 126.
Holt, Henry, his *Garrulities of an Octogenarian*, 350. *Letters to*, 248, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 395, 396, 403.
Holt, Mrs. Henry, 395.
Holyrood Palace, 200.
Home Rule bill, in House of Commons, 202.
Hood, Thomas, quoted, 372.
Hooker, Joseph, 130, 131.
Hoover, Herbert, 329, 408,
Houghton Mifflin Co., 78, 81, 83, 219, 277, 353, 355.
Hovelacque, M., 301.
Howe, M. A. DeW., his verses in memory of Hamilton Kuhn, 96, 97 and *n.*; mentioned, 149. *Letters to*, 96, 97, 270.
Howells, William D., 172 and *n.*, 354.
Hughes, Charles E., *T.* decides to vote for (1916), 286; mentioned, 278, 285, 412.
Hume, David, 19.
Huntington, Collis P., and Vedder, 128.
Hyde, William DeW., 159.

Imperialism, *T.* opposed to, 229.
International Congress of Historical Sciences (1903). *See* Rome.
Irving, Washington, *Sketch-Book*, 3.
Irwin, Agnes, 140.
Isaacs, Rufus, Earl Reading, 314.
Italian history, *T.*'s interest in, 25, 26; of mid-19th century, *T.* reading up on, 66, 67.
Italy, *T.*'s first visit to (1875), 13 ff.; the charm of, 111; *T.*'s diary quoted on his visit to, in 1903, 120 ff.; status of, in 1849, 171; attitude of, early in the War, 239; and Fiume and Dalmatia, 369; and the American press, 390.
Ives, George B., 404, 405.

James II, 203.
James, Henry, 115, 258.
James, William, his *Letters*, 402; mentioned, 115, 189.
Jameson, Mrs. (Anna B. Murphy), 8.
Japanese Question, the, 150.
Jefferson, Thomas, 386.
Jeffrey, Francis, Lord, 153.
Jiggins, Jemima, 263, 264.
Joan of Arc, 203.
Joffre, Joseph J. C., in Boston, 298; at Harvard, 298; his personality and achievement, 299.
Johnson, Andrew, 386.
Johnson, Hiram W., 394.
Johnson, Robert U., 406, 407.
Journalism, *T.*'s idea of, 28.

Key, Beatrice, *T.*'s niece, 50.
Key, Clarence, 14.
Key, Edith, *T.*'s niece, 50. *See* Haines, Edith (Key).
Key, Francis Scott, 12.
Key, John R., *T.*'s brother-in-law, 12, 49.
Key, Mabel (Thayer), *T.*'s sister, her relations with *T.*, 50; mentioned, 12. *Letters to:* see Chapter III.
Key, Mabel, *T.*'s niece, 50.
Key, Pansy, *T.*'s niece, 50.
Keynes, John M., his book on post-war conditions, 387, 388.
King, Clarence, 248, 250, 251.
Kingsley, Charles, quoted, 379.
Kipling, Rudyard, his poem 'Great Heart,' and Roosevelt, 371, 372.
Kitchener, Herbert (Earl), 238.
Knox, Philander S., 374.
Koopman, Harry L., *The Poetry of*

William Roscoe Thayer, 136 *n.*
Letters to, 136, 258, 359.
Kropotkin, Prince Peter, *T.*'s estimate of, 113.

Lampoon, The (Harvard), 40th birthday of, 270; mentioned, 18.
Lane, Gardiner M., 141.
Lane, William C., 141.
Lang, Andrew, 73.
Lang, Cosmo G., Archbishop of York, his visit to Boston a remarkable event, 125; dinner to, at Tavern Club, 125; mentioned, 318, 323.
Lanier, Sidney, 26, 34, 36.
Lansing, Robert, 307.
Lausanne, 206.
Lawrence, William, Bishop, 279, 325.
League of Nations, 381.
Lee, Vernon, 111.
Leland, Charles G., 124.
Leopardi, Count Giacomo, 19.
Lewis, W. D., *Life of Roosevelt*, 368.
Liberty Day (1917), 310.
Liberty Loan (second), 310.
Liège, defence of, 232.
Lincoln, Abraham, how he should be represented in history, 339, 341, 342; mentioned, 291, 321.
Lincoln, Robert T., 339.
Lippincott's Magazine, 93, 94, 95 and *n.*
Liszt, Franz, 113.
Livermore, Thomas L., his death and character, 316.
Liverpool, 12.
Lloyd George, David, *T.*'s estimate of, 375; mentioned, 339, 387.
Lodge, Henry Cabot, disliked and distrusted by *T.*, 229; *T.*'s changed opinion of, 295, 310, 311; 'our chief statesman,' 311; his deference to the President *as* President, 338; his eulogy of Roosevelt, 363; *T.* urges him to write a history of the U.S. since 1890, 363, 364; the fittest person to write the definitive biography of Roosevelt, 364; and Wilson's first voyage to France, 399; mentioned, 191, 242, 243, 244, 245, 265, 266, 307, 309, 353, 354, 365. *Letters to*, 255, 337, 341, 362, 386, 398.
Lodge, Mrs. H. C., 244, 274.
Lombroso, Cesare, 167.
London, visit to (1874), 12.
London *Times*, 264.
London World, on *T.*'s *Cavour*, 190.
Long, John D., 141, 146, 191.
Longfellow, Henry W., proposed commemoration of, by Mass. Historical Society, 149; mentioned, 114.
Louis XIV, 330.
Louvre, the, 204.
Lowell, A. Lawrence, as a candidate for President of Harvard, 155 and *n.*; his election, 159, 160; mentioned, 217, 325, 330.
Lowell, James Russell, *T.*'s studies under, 37, 38, 39; his conversation, 39; and Norton, as interpreters of Dante, 40, 41; a cheerful visit with him and Leslie Stephen, 117, 118; mentioned, 114, 141.
Lusitania, sinking of, 249; commemoration of sinking of, 279, 280.
Luxembourg Palace, 205.

McAdoo, William G., 263, 307.
McCarthy, Justin, *History of My Own Time*, 75, 76.
MacDonald, Pirie, 384.
McKim, Charles F., 167.
McKinley, William, 107, 155.
McKinley Tariff Act of 1890, characterized, 75.
McLeod, Robert A., 15, 16.
MacVeagh, Charles, 274, 337, 395.
MacVeagh, Fanny, 337.
MacVeagh, Wayne, 243, 274.
Macaulay, Thomas B., Lord, his journal quoted, 69 and *n.*; Carlyle's description of, 85; *T.*'s article on, 158 and *n.*; mentioned, 153.
Mackaye, Percy, 139.
Macvane, Silas M., 321.
Magazines, English and American, difference between, 175.
Mahaffy, John P., 176, 177.
Maimon, Solomon, *T.*'s opinion of his autobiography, 55.

Mallock, W. H., 201.
Marie Antoinette, Queen, 204.
Martinengo. *See* Cesaresco.
Mary, Queen of Scots, 200.
Massachusetts Central R.R., and 'The Oaks,' 20, 21.
Massachusetts Historical Society, *T.*'s connection with, 86, 87 and *n.*; *T.* suggests commemoration of Longfellow by, 149; his comments on the 'proceedings' of, 149, 150, 157; Dr. Gordon's address on *T.* to, 418, 419; mentioned, 120, 260, 261, 363.
Mather, Cotton, 72, 151.
Mather, Increase, 72.
Matthews, Nathan, 288.
Maximilian, Prince, 339.
Mayo, Lawrence S., *Life of Lord Amherst*, 275. *Letter to*, 275.
Mazzini, Giuseppe, *T.*'s article on, 174; mentioned, 221.
Meissonier, Jean L. E., 204.
Memorial Day (1918), 332.
Meredith, George, *The Egoist*, 55; *A Reading of Earth*, 61; his *mot* on Hall Caine, 168; his letters, 210, 211; quoted, 373; mentioned, 87, 179.
Metropolitan Magazine, rejects an article by *T.*, 340.
Metternich-Winneburg, Clemens von, his memoirs, 70; mentioned, 348.
Mexico, and the Wilson administration, 230.
Meyer, George von L., 126.
Milan, in 1875, 13; meeting of Risorgimento Congress at, 148.
Millet, F. D., 158.
Miltiades, 299.
Milton, John, commemoration at Harvard of his tercentenary, 152–54.
Montaigne, Michel de, 111, 404, 406.
Moore, John, his *Letters*, 26; mentioned, 111.
More, Paul E., 167, 168, 353, 354.
Morgan, J. P., Jr., 242.
Morize, André, 332.
Morley, John (Viscount), *Miscellanies*, 175; *T.* on his *Recollections*, 325, 326; mentioned, 39, 153, 158, 174, 192, 202, 211, 299.
Morris, Harrison S., *Letters to*, 93, 94, 139, 190 *n.*, 215 *n.*
Morse, John T., Jr., 191, 192, 379. *Letters to*, 135, 189, 219, 226, 378.
Motley, J. Lothrop, 191.
Münsterberg, Hugo, 115.
Muirhead, John, *Letter to*, 278.
Munich, 42.
Murdock, Harold, *The Reconstruction of Europe*, reviewed by *T.*, 69.

Naples, *T.*'s diary quoted on, 129.
Napoleon I, 30, 170, 203, 239, 299, 330, 340.
Nasi, Signor, 123.
Nathan, a Jew, Mayor of Rome, 173, 174; translates *T.*'s article on Mazzini, 174.
Nation, The, 69, 110 *n.*, 122 *n.*, 148 *n.*
National Institute of Arts and Letters, 263, 399.
National Security League, *T.*'s speech at meeting of, in Washington, 288, 289 and *n.*
New York *Evening Post*, 237, 247.
New York *Sun*, 247.
New York *Times*, 247.
Ney, Michel, 204.
Nietzsche, F., 233, 234.
Nigra, Constantino, 126, 180.
Nobel prizes, 291 and *n.*, 292.
Norman, Sir Henry, 202.
North American Review, 158, 303 *n.*, 304, 340, 398, 412 *n.*
Norton, Charles E., his influence on *T.*, 37, 38, 46, 119, 120; his interpretation of Dante, 38, 40, 41; *T.*'s intimate relations with, 46; and *T.*, and Carlyle's letters, 76, 77; his translation of Dante's *Purgatory*, 77; plan to buy his library and works of art for Harvard, 140, 141; and the Elective System, 156; commemoration of his 80th birthday, 172; and the Boston *Globe*, 409; mentioned, 99, 112, 114, 143, 144, 162, 396. *Letters to*, 46, 85, 119, 165, 167.
Noyes, Alfred, 211.
Nuova Antologia, 174.

Open Court, The, 69.
Osborne, Thomas M., 155 *n.*
Oxford Movement, the, *T.*'s article on, 69.

Page, Arthur, 318, 333, 372.
Page, Walter Hines, editor of the *Atlantic*, 98; *T.*'s friendship with, 98; founder and editor of the *World's Work*, 98, 99; *T.*'s estimate of, as editor, 99; appointed Ambassador to Great Britain, 230 *n.*; mentioned, 323. *Letters to*, 98, 101, 102, 103, 230, 317.
Page, Miss, 318.
Palladio, Andrea, 167.
Palmer, George H., and the imparting of culture, 156; mentioned, 172 *n.*
Palmerston, Lord. *See* Temple, Henry J.
Pantheon, the (Paris), 205.
Papacy, Victor Emanuel on temporal power of, 127.
Paris, visits to (1874–75), 12, 13; (1912), 203–05.
Parker, Alton B., Democratic nominee for President (1904), and the gold standard, 133, 134.
Parkman, Francis, 91.
Parnell, Charles S., 39.
Pater, Walter, 73.
Pathfinder, The, 136 and *n.*
Patti, Adelina, 29.
Peabody, Andrew P., 19, 84.
Peacock, Gibson, offers *T.* a position on Philadelphia *Bulletin*, 26, 27; scholar, man of culture, critic, 26; mentioned, 5.
Peacock, Mrs. Gibson, 'linguist and musician,' 26, 27; death of, 88; mentioned, 5, 6, 29, 206. *Letters to*, 7, 10, 19, 20, 21, 23, 25.
Peckham, William G., 109.
Perry, Bliss, *Life and Letters of H. L. Higginson*, 105, 106; his *Walt Whitman* praised by *T.*, 168; his Phi Beta Kappa oration (1919), 372; mentioned, 150, 170, 172 and *n.*, 370.
Perry, Nora, 224.
Pershing, John J., 396.
Persian poetry, *T.*'s delight in, 61, 62.
Peters, Andrew J., Mayor of Boston, 390.
Petrarch, Francesco, monument to, 94, 95; his claims on posterity, 94.
'Pewter Napoleon,' the, 334.
Phelps, Abel, *T.*'s maternal grandfather, 12; his copy of Watts's version of the Psalms, 56.
Phelps, Maria W. *See* Thayer, Maria (Phelps).
Phelps, Sarah, *T.*'s aunt, her generosity to her nephews, 16; mentioned, 5, 7, 9, 21.
Phi Beta Kappa, *T.* an honorary member and president of Harvard chapter of, 391 and *n.*, 392.
Philadelphia, *T.*'s life with the Peacocks in, 31 ff.
Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin*, *T.* accepts a position on (1882), 26, 27, and resigns it (1885), 32.
Philadelphia *North American*, 69.
Philippine Affair, the, 102, 114.
Philippines, Harvard men in the, 159, 160.
Phillips, William, 242.
Pier, Arthur S., 207, 403, 405.
Piozzi, Hester Lynch (Thrale), 111.
Pisani, Victor, 291.
Pius IX, Pope, 171.
Playboy of the West, The, 186.
Poetry, *T.*'s first and deepest literary passion, 83, 304; *T.* on the writing of, 138, 139.
Polyphemus Club, 324.
Prescott, William H., 191.
Prohibition, in effect, 371. *See* Constitution of the U.S.
Protection, *T.* on apponent of, 229; a minor issue in 1916, 286.
Putnam, George Haven, 293, 348, 366.
Putnam, Herbert, 155 *n.*, 243.

Quincy, Josiah, 109.
Quirinal, the, *T.* attends royal dinner party at, 123, 124.

Radetzky, Joseph W., 170.

'Radio boys,' at Cambridge, 312, 319, 323, 324, 326.
Rae, Rebecca, 289.
Rand, Edward K., his *Supposed Autographa of John the Scot*, 397. *Letter to*, 397.
Rathom, ——, editor of the Providence *Journal*, 318.
Rattazzi, Urbano, 125.
Reading, Earl. *See* Isaacs.
Reading, *T.*'s advice to his sister concerning, 67.
Reid, Whitelaw, 203.
Republican Convention (1912), 201.
Rhodes, James Ford, his 70th birthday dinner, 326, 327, 328, 330; mentioned, 109, 150, 217, 225, 235, 339.
Richards, Theodore W., awarded Nobel prize, 291 *n.*; mentioned, 140. *Letters to*, 196, 291.
Richmond, Va., 386.
Risorgimento, First Historical Congress of the, *T.* reads paper on Cavour and Bismarck at, 148 and *n.*, 150, 151, 169, 171 *n.*
Rizzio, David, 200.
Robinson, Corinne (Roosevelt), 363, 366, 380. *Letters to*, 364, 402.
Rodin, Auguste, 'Le Penseur,' 205, 206.
Rome, visit to (1877), 16; Congress of Historical Sciences, Harvard represented by *T.* at, 120 ff.; King Edward VII at, 128; a Jew elected Mayor of, 173.
Roosevelt, Quentin, death of, 335 and *n.*
Roosevelt, Theodore, H. L. Higginson's tribute to, 107; *T.*'s appreciation of, 107, 108; as a possible President of Harvard, 130; his opinion of *Cavour*, 190, 191; bolts nomination of Taft, 201; *T.* a part-time Bull Moose, 208; his speech as President of American Historical Association, 209; 'a wonderful creature,' 209, 210; though his friend, *T.* never voted for him, 229; to be next president (1916), 278; *T.* wishes him to go to France, 296; *T.* on writing his life, 296; and the Polyphemus Club, 324; breakfasts with J. F. Rhodes, 328, 330; death of, 356, 357, 358; *T.* proposes to write an appreciation of, 356, 357; forced Wilson to declare war and send troops to France, 357; 'our greatest public man since Lincoln,' 358; Bishop official biographer of, 360; *T.*'s changed opinion of, 361; Lodge's eulogy of, 363; his decision to support Blaine (1884), 365; Lewis's life of, 368; and the Trusts, 389; his 'superficial' egotism, 389, 390; and Harvard, 393; election of 1920 a great tribute to, 398; mentioned, 84, 114, 177, 230, 269, 279, 285, 340, 362, 394, 402. *Letters to, see* Thayer, William Roscoe, under *Letters*.
Root, Elihu, 289, 290, 366, 398.
Roscoe, William, why *T.* was named for him, 3, 5; *T.*'s appreciation of, 59, 60; his works, 59 *n.*
Rose, J. Holland, *Letter to*, 236.
Ross, Denman W., 301.
Rossetti, Dante G., 202.
Royce, Josiah, his lectures, 75; his speech on the duty of Americans, 275, 276; mentioned, 99.
Rubens, Peter Paul, 47, 48.
Ruskin, John, *Præterita*, 58; death of, 111, 112; mentioned, 47.
Russell, Lady Agatha, visit to, 201. *Letters to*, 184, 208, 231, 247.
Russell, George W. E., 209.
Russell, Lord John (Earl), *T.*'s admiration for, 185; mentioned, 184, 201.
Russell, Margaret (Swan), close friendship of the Thayers with, 131, 132; marries Michael Foster after Russell's death, 132; mentioned, 89. *Letters to*, 90, 132. *See* Foster, Margaret (Swan).
Russell, William E., death of, 89, 90; mentioned, 131, 132, 133, 229, 302, 362, 376.
Russell, William E., Jr., 376, 388.
Russia, in 1906, 150; demands of (May, 1917), 300; in 1918, 322.

St. Louis, Mo., 66.

St. Paul's Cathedral, meeting for First Hospital Unit at, 296, 297.
St. Paul's School, *T.* a student at, 6 ff.; visit to, (1890), 71.
St. Peter's (Rome), 122.
Sainte-Beuve, C.-A., 153.
Saints Maurizio and Lazzaro, *T.* a Knight of the Order of, 416.
Salisbury, Marquis of. *See* Cecil.
Salter, W. M., 73.
Salvini, Tommaso, *T.*'s visit to, and enthusiasm for, 20; his Othello, 73, 74.
Sampson, Mary (Ware), 93 *n.*
Santena, Italy, *T.* a guest of Visconti-Venosta at, 197, 198.
Sargent, John S., 205, 388, 393, 408.
Saturday Club, 286.
Saturday Evening Post, 332, 334.
Scheidemann, Herr, 339.
Schiller, Friedric von, quoted, 407.
Schofield, William H., 140.
Schopenhauer, Arthur, 19.
Scribner's Magazine, 369.
Scribner's Sons, Charles, and Roosevelt's letters, 363, 365.
Scudder, Horace E., *Letter to*, 86.
Seasickness, 129.
Seaverns, Joel H., 203.
Senate of U.S., rejects treaty of Versailles, 380.
Shakespeare, William, *T.* on study of, 11; his birthplace, 200; mentioned, 279.
Shaler, Nathaniel S., 9.
Shaler, Mrs., 245.
Shaw, G. Bernard, 410.
Shelley, Percy B., 178, 302.
Sherman, William T., anecdote of, 131.
Siam, Crown Prince of, 118.
Sickles, Daniel E., 131.
Siena, winter of 1875–76 at, 12 ff.; *T.* writes on history of, 14.
Simonds, Frank H., 369.
Smith, Goldwin, 152, 172 and *n.*, 174, 181, 217.
Smith, Jeremiah, death of, 410. *Letters to*, 198, 208.
Smith, Jeremiah, Jr., 198.
Smith College, *T.* lectures at, 216.
Sorel, Albert, *Montesquieu*, 130.
South Kensington Museum, 202.
Spanish War, denounced by *T.*, 229; mentioned, 102.
Sprague, Carleton, death of, 287, 288; mentioned, 30.
Sprague, Henry W., *Letters to*, 287, 401.
Springfield *Republican*, 247.
Spring-Rice, Sir Cecil A., his service as Ambassador, 314, 315; his death, 321, 336, 337; his inside acquaintance with German policy, 321, 337; mentioned, 269, 274, 345. *Letters to*, 302, 314, 317.
Spring-Rice, Lady, 315, 345.
Stedman, Edmund C., *T.*'s characterization of, 140; his appreciation of *T.*'s poetry, 140 *n.*; mentioned, 87.
Stendhal, de. *See* Beyle.
Stephen, Sir Leslie, his *George Eliot*, and other works, 117; and J. A. Lowell, 117, 118.
Stevenson, R. L., his *Treasure Island* contrasted with *Robinson Crusoe*, 130; mentioned, 112.
Stoddard, Richard H., 87.
Storey, Moorfield, 141, 288.
Storrow, James J., 155 *n.*
Strachey, Lytton, *Queen Victoria*, 410.
Stratford-on-Avon, 200.
Strong, Richard P., his work in the War, 408.
Superhuman fallacy, the, 318.
Switzerland, visit to (1875), 13.
Sybel, Heinrich von, *History of the Founding of the German Empire*, 80.
Symonds, J. A., 111.

Tacitus, 181.
Taft, William H., renominated (1912), 201; Roosevelt's treatment of, 368; mentioned, 380.
Tagore, Rabindranath, 211.
Taine, Hippolyte A., 153.
Talleyrand-Périgord, Charles M. de, 24.
Taussig, Frank W., 159.
Taylor, Henry O., *The Mediæval Mind*, 184; on *The Education of Henry*

Adams, 344; *T.* reviews his book for *Graduates' Magazine*, 404, 405, 406; mentioned, 304, 407, 408. *Letters to*, 184, 260, 262, 403, 405.
Taylor, Mrs. H. O. (Isham), 408.
Temple, Henry J., Lord Palmerston, 85.
Tennyson, Alfred, Lord, his *Ulysses*, quoted, 419; mentioned, 69, 86, 401 and *n.*
'Teuton against Slav,' 232, 233.
Thackeray, W. M., 85, 86, 209.
Thanksgiving Day (1916), 288.
Thayer, Albert, *T.*'s brother, 5, 15, 16.
Thayer, Edith (Mrs. F. C. Welch), *T.*'s sister, 5, 14, 15, 16, 57, 66, 70.
Thayer, Elias B., *T.*'s grandfather, 4.
Thayer, Elizabeth H. (Ware), *T.*'s wife, as a seller of Liberty bonds, 310; mentioned, 89, 131, 148, 176, 185, 195, 198, 199, 208, 210, 212, 214, 215, 217, 230, 255, 262, 280, 289, 290, 301, 302, 322, 337, 346 and *n.*, 347, 358, 362, 363, 366, 370, 380, 387, 408. *Letters to*, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245.
Thayer, Frederic William, *T.*'s father, his life and death, 4, 5; mentioned, 3, 12, 207.
Thayer, Frederic Winthrop, *T.*'s brother, at Harvard, 16; death of, 223; *T.* quoted on, 223; mentioned, 5, 15, 66, 84, 408.
Thayer, Mabel, *T.*'s sister, 5. *See* Key, Mabel (Thayer).
Thayer, Margaret W., *T.*'s daughter, birth of, 89; her coming-out party, 258, 264; mentioned, 132, 148, 185, 195, 198, 223, 230, 245, 258, 260 and *n.*, 264, 284, 413. *Letter to*, 288.
Thayer, Margery (Wheeler), 4.
Thayer, Maria (Phelps), *T.*'s mother, after her husband's death, 5, 6; in Europe with her children, 11 ff.; left in straitened circumstances by embezzlement, 12, 13; her attitude toward *T.*'s juvenile writing, 74; mentioned, 7, 9, 15, 21, 24, 74, 185, 206, 207. *Letter to*, 9.
Thayer Thomas, the emigrant ancestor, 4.
Thayer, William Roscoe
Why he left behind him no personal reminiscences, no material for a biographer, 1, 2; why he was named for William Roscoe, 3; how he became interested in Italian history, 3; his ancestry, 4, 5; birth, 5; childhood and early schooling, 5; and the Peacocks, 5, 6; at St. Paul's School, 6 ff.; gives promise of his future as a writer, 6; wins twice the English Composition prize, 6; his youthful scrawls, 7; criticism of Miss Cushman, 7, 8; appreciation of Dickens, 10; in Europe in 1874, 12 ff.; at school in Paris, 12; in Switzerland, 13; at Siena, 13–15; his first lessons in Italian, 14; writes on the history, etc., of Siena, 14; at Graz, Austria, 15; writes essay on Cavour, 15; his sallies into creative literature, including poetry, 15; in Capri, 16; his first idea of writing a life of Cavour, 16; in Rome, 16.
Enters Harvard in class of 1881, 16; his college clubs, 17; contributor to the *Advocate*, and editor and president of *Crimson* and *Lampoon*, 18; his scholastic record, 18; his literary reputation, 18; on his reading, 19, 24; on P. Brooks, 20; his talk with Salvini, 20; determines upon a literary career, 23; seeks a position on a newspaper, 23, 24, 25; contributes to Boston *Sunday Budget*, 25; his 'occasional' writings, 25; Italian history his special study, 25; accepts a position on Philadelphia *Bulletin* from Mr. Peacock, 26, 27; his life with the Peacocks, 27, 29; his work on the *Bulletin*, 27, 28, 29; on Patti's singing, 29; on Berlioz's *Damnation*, 29; studying Goethe, 30; projected articles on him and others, 30, 31; his first volume of poems published, 31; writes for magazines, 32; resigns from the *Bulletin*, 32; describes his interview with Whitman, and his impressions of him, 32–36; a graduate student at Harvard,

37 ff.; Norton's influence on, 37, 38, 46, 119, 120; his article on Norton (1921), quoted, 37 and *n.*; his courses under Norton and Lowell, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41; quoted on their respective interpretations of Dante, 38, 40, 41; on Lowell and *Don Quixote*, 38, 39; receives A.M. from Harvard, 41; in Europe and Africa in 1879, 41 ff.; *Bed, Buns & Beer*, 43–45; his impressions of Europe, as to painting, etc., given in letter to Norton, 46 ff.

Settles in Cambridge for life, 49, 51; his income, 49; his life for six years set forth in his letters to Mrs. Key, 49 ff. (chapter III); on his plans, 52, 53; declines professorship at Cornell, 53; on the genius of Josef Hofmann, 54; serves as instructor in English at Harvard, 54, 55, 57; his occasional reading, 55; his article on Bismarck, 56 and *n.*; on Ruskin, 58, 59, 111, 112; on William Roscoe, 59 and *n.*, 60; on Matthew Arnold's *Literature and Dogma*, 60; on George Meredith's *A Reading of Earth*, 61; on the delights of Persian poetry, 61, 62; on Von Bülow's playing, 62; on Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, 62, 63; his appointment at Harvard not renewed, 63; determines to go on with a literary career, 63, 64; applies for professorship of English Literature at University of California, 64, but fails to receive it, 65; in Europe in 1889, 65; his article on Giordano Bruno published, 66 and *n.*; advises his sister on reading, 67; on R. Browning, 67, 68; on the uncertainty of future fame, 68, 69; various articles by, published in magazines, 69, 70; plans publication of a weekly official newspaper at Harvard, 70, 71, but the Corporation disapproves, 72; emotions on revisiting St. Paul's School, 71; on Salvini as Othello, 73; on his mother's attitude toward his juvenile scribbling, 74; on public corruption and the McKinley Tariff, 75; on McCarthy's *History*, 75, 76; in Europe in 1891, 76; making selections from Carlyle's correspondence, 76, 77, 85, 86; edits first number of the *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, 78, 79; becomes engaged to Elizabeth Ware, 79, 80; on the death of Phillips Brooks, 81, 82; his marriage, 83.

His publications previous to his marriage, 83; his work on the *Graduates' Magazine* summarized, 84 (and see that heading in the Index); joins Mass. Historical Society, 86, 87; his long connection with the Society, 87 *n.*; on Meredith's commendation of one of his poems, 87; his friendship with H. H. Furness, 88; on W. E. Russell's death, 89, 90; suffers a nervous breakdown and consequent interruption of his work on Cavour, 90 ff.; on the death of John Fiske, 91, 92; receives the Order of the Crown of Italy, 93; on Petrarch, 94, 95; 'The Legends and Pageants of Venice,' published (1904), 95 and *n.*; nature and extent of his duties as editor of the *Graduates' Magazine*, 95 ff.; 'At the Grave of Samuel Adams,' 97 and *n.*; his friendly relations with W. H. Page, 98; on the beginnings of the *World's Work*, 98–100; his article on President Eliot, 101, 103; on the lack of moral sense in the American people, 102, 103, 104; on the misery of being unable to work, 104; his interest in Harvard, 105; B. Perry quoted on his fatherhood of the Harvard Union, 105, 106; suggests to Roosevelt that the Class of 1880 endow a professorship in Government, 109, 110; his friendship with the Countess Cesaresco, 110; publishes an article on her life and work, in the *Nation*, 110 *n.*; on Prince Kropotkin, 113; on Owen Wister, 113, 114; on the Transvaal and Philippine Wars, 112, 114; on Countess Cesaresco's *Cavour*, 115; on Prince Henry of Prussia, 116; on Leslie Stephen's *George Eliot*, 117; a call upon Lowell and Stephen, 117,

118; on Norton's influence for good on his pupils, 119, 120; in Italy (1903), as delegate to Congress of Historical Sciences in Rome, 120 ff.; his diary quoted, 120–29; the opening session of the Congress, 122, 123; reads paper on 'Biography,' 123; at the royal dinner party, 123, 124; his interview with Biancheri, 123, 124; and with King Victor Emanuel III, 125–27; frequent meetings with Countess Cesaresco in Rome, 128; his diary quoted on the homeward voyage, 129–31; impressions of Naples, 129, and Capri, 129; reads Stevenson, Montesquieu, Bryce; talks with C. F. Adams, 130, 131.

Friendship with Margaret (Mrs. W. E.) Russell, afterward Margaret Foster, 131, 132; on the election of 1904, 133, 134; his poetry the very heart of himself, 136, 137, 139; on his nervous breakdown, 137, 138; on the plan to buy Norton's books for Harvard, 140, 141; and the article in the *Graduates' Magazine* criticizing Yale, 143, 144, 147, 162; and Adams's attack on the Elective System, and his proposed Oxfordisation of Harvard, 144, 145, 146, 147, 151, 152; in Europe for the Risorgimento Congress in Milan, 148 ff.; his paper comparing Cavour and Bismarck, 148 and *n.*; 150, 151, 169, 171 *n.*; jocose remarks on the Historical Society, 150, 157 158 *n.*; on events in Europe, 150; on William Everett and the Milton tercentenary, 152–54; on G. Ferrero, 154; on Lowell's equipment for presidency of Harvard, 155 and *n.*; his policy as editor of the *Graduates' Magazine*, 156; and G. M. Trevelyan, 158, 159; on an editor's life in heaven, 160; and H. N. Gay, 161, 173; on Venice, and St. Mark's (1906), 165–67; on Perry's *Whitman*, 168; on A. D. White's Cavour papers, 171 and *n.*; suggests symposium of appreciations of Norton for his 80th birthday, 172 and *n.*; on Nathan's election as Mayor of Rome, 173; on Mahaffy, 176, 177; on his health, 179, 180; on Trevelyan's *Garibaldi and the Thousand*, 180; on A. D. White, 181; the end of *Cavour*, 182 ff.; his diary quoted thereon, 183; on Taylor's *Mediæval Mind*, 184; his admiration for Earl ('Lord John') Russell, 185; on the Celtic Revival, 186.

The immediate success of *Cavour*, 188 ff.; on the undesirability of writing an absolutely impartial biography, 189; on the teaching of history in American colleges — the 'thesis' standard, 191, 192; on the conflict between Labor and Capital, 194, 195; visits Europe in 1912, 195 ff.; on social conditions in England and France, 196; on the conservatism of the English, 196; a guest of Visconti-Venosta at Cavour's summer estate, 197, 198, 206; on radical tendencies in Europe, 199; his diary quoted, on his European trip, 200–07; on the Republican Convention of 1912, 201; in London, 201–03; in Paris, 203–05; on H. H. Furness, 206; on Roosevelt, 209, 210; elected Overseer of Harvard (1913), and receives four honorary degrees, 211 and *n.*, 214, 215, 217; his diary quoted thereon, and especially on the Harvard degree, 212; on Western Reserve University, 213; lectures at Cornell and Smith, on Crispi, etc., 216, his good fortune in discovering such a subject as Cavour, 217; on Cornell University and A. D. White, 217, 218.

Decides to write the *Life and Letters of John Hay*, 219, 220; his reasons for not going on with the history of Italy, 220, 221; on his brother Frederic, 223; on Adams's *Mont St. Michel and Chartres*, 226; effect of the outbreak of the War on, 228 ff., 233; his political affiliations and principles, 229; a 'Mugwump,' 229; an early admirer of Wilson, 229; on the results of a German victory, 233, 234, 235; on England's participation, 233, 234, 288;

on German psychology, 236, 239; on American sympathy with the Allies, 237, 247, 248; and Lodge, 245; on the attitude of the administration, 246; on German propagandists, 246; on the advisability of the U.S. remaining neutral, 248; on the effect of the sinking of the *Lusitania*, 249; urges H. Adams to publish the *Education*, 250, 251; loses the use of his right eye (his diary quoted), 251, 252, 253, 254, 256, 259, 266, 269, 282, 283, 309; resigns editorship of the *Graduates' Magazine*, 256 *n.*; on the value of the magazine to Harvard, and his editorial policy, 257; on the 'dictation habit,' 258, 259, 283; on the Mass. Historial Society, 260, 261; on Washburn's *Theodore Roosevelt*, 261, 262.

His attention absorbed by the War, 268; his view of his duty therein, 268; on Hay and Roosevelt, and Adams, 273; on the respective rôles of biography and history, 275; at the Tremont Temple meeting in Feb., 1916, 275, 276; on the possibility of Roosevelt's election as President, in 1916, 279; at the commemoration of the sinking of the *Lusitania*, 280; on the death of Victor Chapman, 282, 301; on the biographies he was asked to write, 283 and *n.*; on 'Breakfasting,' 285; on election prospects (1916), 286; his 'political philippics,' 286, 334, 335; Protection a minor issue in 1916, 286, 287; on friendship, 287; his address on 'America's International Relations,' 289 *n.*; on the breaking-off of relations with Germany, 290; his recollections of the years spent on *Cavour*, 291; on G. Washington, 291; at the Carnegie Hall meeting, (Mar., 1917), 293; on our national humiliation, 294; on the entry of the U.S. into the War, 295; his changed opinion of Lodge, 295; on an American expedition to France, 296; on the death of J. H. Choate, 297, 298; on Joffre's visit to Boston, 298, 299; on Russia's attitude, 300; on Victor Chapman's letters, 301, 302, 304; on Wilson's obstinacy, 307; on the overthrowing of old prejudices and beliefs by the War, 310, 311; on the toughness of the human heart, 311.

On Sir C. Spring-Rice's service, 314, and his death, 320, 337; on the prohibitory amendment, 316; on Charnwood's *Lincoln*, 319, 339; on H. Adams's 80th birthday, 319, 320, and his writings and teaching, 320, 321; on Russia and the Bolsheviki, 322, 323, 333; his forecast as to the end of the War, 323, 331; on the Polyphemus Club, 324; on the Archbishop of York, 325; disappointed with Morley's *Recollections*, 325, 326; on J. F. Rhodes, 327, 328; on the danger of a premature peace, 328, 330; on England's achievement in the War, 329, 330; on biography as an art, 331, 379; biography not taught in American colleges, 331; on his 'War-work,' 332; on West Point, 332, 333; 'Prussia's Pewter Prince,' 334 and *n.*; on Quentin Roosevelt's death, 335; 'the first glorious day since the War began, (July, 1918), 335; on the death of H. Adams, 336; on the German move for peace (Oct.), 338, 339; 'A Judas Peace,' 340 and *n.*; thinks we should demand 'unconditional surrender,' 340, 341; on Lodge as 'the great defender of our Cause,' 341; on Wilson's Epistolitis,' 342; 'Let Foch Decide' (verse), 343 and *n.*; on the news of the Armistice, 346, 347, 348, 349; correspondence with Holt concerning H. Adams's works, 350 ff.

Roosevelt's death a deep affliction, 356; decides to write an appreciation of him, 356; lectures at Brown University, 357; on Roosevelt's death, 357, 358; his eulogy of Roosevelt, 358, 359; his fear of total blindness, 361, 412, 413, 414; on Lodge's eulogy of Roosevelt, 363;

urges Lodge to write a history of the U.S. since 1890, 363, 364; 'Personal Recollections of Walt Whitman,' 369, 370; on certain candlesticks, 370, 371; on the going into effect of prohibition, 371; and Kipling, 371, 372; on the Treaty of Versailles, 373; on the letters of John Hay, 374; on the English crisis (1919), 375; on the Boston police strike, 376; on the Prince of Wales, 380; on the rejection of the Treaty and the League of Nations by the Senate, 381; his presidential address to the American Historical Association on Fallacies in Recent History, 382; lectures at University of Virginia, 382; on the cities of the Middle West, 383, 384, 385; on the candidates for the Republican nomination in 1920, 385; impressions of the University of Virginia, 386; his thoughts about death, 387, 409, 410 and *n.*, 414; on Keynes's book, 387, 388; on Trusts and Roosevelt's attitude toward them, 389; on Roosevelt's superficial egotism, 389; speaks at meeting in honor of editor of the *Transcript*, 390; on the nomination of Harding, 394; reëlected Overseer of Harvard, 396; 'The Sage of Shady Hill,' 396 and *n.*; on the election of 1920, 397, 398; on the real purpose of the campaign, 398; suggests D. J. Hill for Secretary of State, 398; on the *Vers Librists*, 401 and *n.*; on W. James's letters, 402; on Bishop's life of Roosevelt, 402; reviews H. O. Taylor's new book, 403, 404, 405, 406; on the war-work of Dr. R. P. Strong, 408; anecdote of C. E. Norton, 409; on Marshal Foch, 412; 'Throwing Away Our Birthright,' 412; *n.* his Italian decorations, 416, 417; what his letters disclose of his character, 417, 418; his courage under affliction, 418; his death, 418; Dr. Gordon's eulogy to the Mass. Historical Society, 418, 419; his personality best expressed in certain lines of Tennyson's *Ulysses*, 419.

His Works, other than articles in magazines and single poems:

Confessions of Hermes and Other Poems (1884), 31, 50, 83.

Tristram (play, 1888), 58 and *n.*

Hesper (verse, 1888), 50, 83.

The Best Elizabethan Plays (1890), 70 and *n.*

An Historical Sketch of Harvard University (1891), 69, 70 and *n.*, 72, 73.

The Dawn of Italian Independence (1893), genesis of, 50; accepted by Houghton Mifflin & Co., 78, 79, 81, and published, 83, 84; 'a large and luminous background for the *Cavour*,' 84, 91; A. D. White on, 171 *n.*

Poems, Old and New (1894), 97 and *n.*

Throne-Makers (1899), 66 *n.*

A Short History of Venice (1905), begun in 1901, to keep his hand in, 93, 95, 119 and *n.*; J. T. Morse's approval of, 135, 136; success of, 162.

Italica (1908), 95 *n.*, 174 and *n.*, 175.

The Life and Times of Cavour (1911), proposed opening chapters of, published as *The Dawn of Italian Independence*, 50, 84, 91; collects materials for, in Europe in 1889, 65; begins to concentrate on, 66, 67; his chief preoccupation for almost a quarter of a century, 84; his work on, interrupted for several years by a nervous breakdown in 1896, 90 ff., 135; the mass of material indirectly connected with C., 92; Biancheri's memories of C., 124, 125; his diary quoted on the resumption of the work, 162–64; its progress as related in his correspondence, 164–82, *passim;* its completion and publication, his diary quoted, 182, 183, 185, 187; his replies to words of praise of the work, 188 ff.; Roosevelt throws a bouquet at, 209; sales of, 210, 215, 274, 305.

The Life and Letters of John Hay (1915), first idea of, 219, 227; search

for materials and progress of the work, 229, 231, 232, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 246, 248, 249, 250, 251, 253, 255; the work completed and published, 257 and *n.*, 258; his purpose in writing the book, 262, 265, 271, 272; his reticence in the matter of names, 269, 274; other references to, 280 and *n.*, 281, 317, 337, 374.

Germany vs. *Civilization: Notes on the Atrocious War* (1916), 277, 278, 282, 283.

The Collapse of Superman (1918), 318.

Theodore Roosevelt (1919), conception of the work, 356, 257, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364; its progress, 365, 366, 367, 373; the 'Taft muddle,' 368, 369; other references, 374, 391, 392; sales of, 391 *n.*

Volleys from a Non-Combatant, a collection of articles on the War (1919), 334, 357, 365, 366, 369.

Democracy, lectures delivered at Brown University (1919), 357, 359.

The Art of Biography, lectures delivered at the University of Virginia (1920), 1, 2, 382.

Life of Washington, 382, 383, 410, 411, 414, 415.

On the subject of Mr. Thayer's views concerning the World War, aside from the matters specially referred to in the Index, see, generally, Chapters XIII and XIV; also the entries under these headings: Lodge (H. C.), Roosevelt (T.), William II, and Wilson (Woodrow).

Letters to Charles F. Adams, 140, 141, 143, 145, 146, 147, 149, 151, 152, 154, 155, 157, 158; Henry Adams, 224, 250, 265, 267, 269, 271, 319; Frederic Allen, 3; Harriet Amory, 406; Harrison O. Apthorp, 28, 30, 31; Albert J. Beveridge, 385, 386, 392, 394, 397, 399; Poultney Bigelow, 254, 262, 334, 348, 415; Mrs. J. Donald Cameron, 272, 280, 284, 336, 343, 411; Countess Martinengo Cesaresco, 2, 110, 112, 113, 114, 117, 118, 178, 181, 197, 199, 216; John J. Chapman, 282, 301, 303, 304, 414; Isabella Coolidge, 32; Arthur L. Cross, 192, 247; Frederic Crowninshield, 226, 238, 240; Mrs. Frederic Crowninshield, 400; Elizabeth Cutting, 412; Frank N. Doubleday, 371, 375; William Endicott, 307; W. Cameron Forbes, 159, 194, 289; Worthington C. Ford, 220, 234, 235, 373; Margaret (Swan) Foster, 185, 214, 224, 249, 257, 259, 263, 275, 278, 279, 284, 286, 288, 290, 293, 294, 296, 297, 300, 309, 311, 315, 321, 325, 326, 328, 329, 331, 332, 333, 335, 342, 346, 357, 358, 369, 370, 372, 375, 379, 383, 384, 387, 388, 391, 393, 396, 407, 409; Horace H. Furness, 88, 89; H. Nelson Gay, 91, 92, 93, 164, 165, 170, 172, 174, 176, 177, 179, 182, 210, 246, 282, 286, 290, 329, 390, 413; James Geddes, 408; Robert Grant, 193, 195, 256, 377, 391; Ferris Greenslet, 414; Benjamin F. Harding, 42; Charles D. Hazen, 252, 254, 270, 361, 365, 366, 367, 368, 377, 383, 386, 388; Rupert S. Holland, 256; Henry Holt, 248, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 395, 396, 403; M. A. DeWolfe Howe, 96, 97, 270; Mabel (Thayer) Key, 50, 53, 55, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 67, 69, 70, 71, 72, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81; Harry L. Koopman, 136, 258, 359; H. C. Lodge, 255, 337, 341, 362, 386, 398; Percy Mackaye, 139; Lawrence S. Mayo, 275; Harrison S. Morris, 93, 94, 139, 190 *n.*, 215 *n.*; John T. Morse, Jr., 135, 189, 219, 226, 378; John Muirhead, 278; Charles E. Norton, 46, 85, 119, 165, 167; Thomas M. Osborne, 155 *n.*; Walter Hines Page, 98, 101, 102, 103, 230, 317; Mrs. Gibson Peacock, 7, 10, 19, 20, 21, 23, 25; Arthur S. Pier, 207; George H. Putnam, 348; Edward K. Rand, 397; Theodore W. Richards, 196, 291; Corinne (Roosevelt) Robin-

son, 364, 402; Theodore Roosevelt, 106, 108, 109, 190, 294, 296, 299, 319, 324, 326, 335; J. Holland Rose, 236; Lady Agatha Russell, 184, 208, 231, 247; Margaret (Swan) Russell, 90, 132 (*and see* Margaret (Swan) Foster); Horace E. Scudder, 86; Jeremiah Smith, 198, 208; Henry W. Sprague, 287, 401; Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, 302, 314, 317; Henry O. Taylor, 184, 260, 262, 403, 405; Elizabeth (Ware) Thayer, 241, 242, 243, 244, 244, 245; Margaret W. Thayer, 288; Maria W. (Phelps) Thayer, 9; Charles F. Thwing, 96, 159, 211 *n.*, 213, 214, 222, 232, 312, 327, 330, 340, 349, 416; Charles W. Townsend, 216, 381; George M. Trevelyan, 180; Henry van Dyke, 369, 399, 401; Charles G. Washburn, 261, 360; E. Sohier Welch, 306, 308, 325; Barrett Wendell, 160; Andrew D. White, 169, 171, 172, 174, 217.

Thayer, Train and Warren, 4.

Thiers, Adolphe, 259.

Thoreau, Henry D., 178.

Thorndike, Paul, 365.

Thwing, Charles F., 211 *n.* *Letters to*, see Thayer, William Roscoe, under *Letters*.

Thwing, Mrs. Charles F., 213, 214, 223.

Titanic, loss of, 158.

Tokio, *T.* offered professorship at, 65.

Tolstoy, Count Lyoff, *Anna Karenina*, 62, 63.

Tone, Miss, 336, 345.

Torrey, Henry W., 321.

Townsend, Charles W., *Letters to*, 216, 381.

Trecchi papers, the, 182.

Tremont Temple, mass meetings at, 275, 276, 288, 308.

Trevelyan, George Macaulay, and *T.* assist each other by exchanging chapters, etc., 161; his qualities as an historian, 161; his *Garibaldi and the Thousand*, 180; mentioned, 158, 159. *Letter to*, 180.

Union League Club of Philadelphia, *T.* a member of, 27; protests against its indorsement of Blaine (1884), 28.

Unitarian Review, 69.

United States, *T.* on the characteristics of, which would make the nation terrible in war, 116, 117; arguments in favor of neutrality of (1915), 248; conditions in (May, 1918), 329.

Unpartizan Review, *T.* on an understudy for editor of, 403.

Valerio, Signor, 125.

Van Dyke, Henry, his poem to France, 400; mentioned, 318. *Letters to*, 369, 399, 401.

Vatican, the, and the French Republic, 150.

Vedder, Elihu, in Rome, 127, 128.

Venice, *T.*'s history of, 93, 119 and *n.*; in 1906, 165–67.

Verdun, 277, 278, 279.

Versailles, 205.

Versailles, Treaty of, rejected by Senate of U.S., 381; mentioned, 373, 386.

Victor Emanuel II, 182.

Victor Emanuel III, *T.*'s interview with, as described in his diary, 125–27; his praise of Cavour, 126; mentioned, 123, 416, 417.

Victoria, Queen, 185.

Villari, Pasquale, 123.

Virginia, University of, *T.* lectures at, 382, 386.

Visconti-Venosta, Marquis, *T.* his guest at Santena, 206; mentioned, 198 and *n.*

Vivaro, Princess de, 123.

Voltaire, Arouet de, *Candide*, 409.

Wadsworth, Eliot, 329.

Wadsworth, Mrs., 242, 243, 271.

Wagner, Richard, *Tristan and Isolde*, and *Parsifal*, 43.

Wales, Prince of. *See* Edward.

Walker, Miss, 303.

Walpole, Horace, *Castle of Otranto*, 68, 69.
Ward, Humphry, 201.
Ware, Elizabeth Hastings, *T.* becomes engaged to, 79, 80; his estimate of her character, 81; her ancestry, 83; married to *T.*, 83; mentioned, 75. *See* Thayer, Elizabeth (Ware).
Ware, Ellen Hastings, Mrs. *T.*'s mother, 83.
Ware, Henry, Mrs. *T.*'s father, 83.
Ware, William, 83.
Washburn, Charles G., his *Theodore Roosevelt*, 261 and *n.*, 262; mentioned, 363, 365. *Letters to*, 261, 360.
Washington, George, *T.* writes life of, 382, 383; as *T.* saw him, 415; mentioned, 291, 321.
Washington, city of, in Hay's time, 265.
Washington Conference, the, 412.
Waterhouse, Benjamin, 83.
Watts, Isaac, his version of the Psalms, 56.
'Waverley Oaks,' and the Massachusetts Central R.R., 20, 21.
Webster, John, *The Duchess of Malfy*, 70, 118; *The White Devil*, 118 and *n.*
Welch, Barbara, 308.
Welch, E. Sohier, *Letters to*, 306, 308, 325.
Welch, Francis, 308.
Wendell, Barrett, on *Cavour*, 188; death of, 405; mentioned, 160, 243.
West Point, 332, 333.
Western Reserve University, *T.* receives degree from, 211 and *n.*, 212, 213, 214.
Westminster Abbey, the Poets' Corner, 207.
Wharton, Edith, 281.
Wharton, William F., 109.
Wharton, Mr., offers chemical laboratory to Harvard, 139, 140.
Wheeler, Margery. *See* Thayer, Margery (Wheeler).
Whistler, James A. M., 205.
White, Andrew D., his autobiography, 169; his papers on Cavour, 171 and *n.*; his *United Kingdom*, 181; his character and achievement, 218; mentioned, 161, 172 *n.*, 216. *Letters to*, 169, 171, 172, 174, 217.
White, Mrs. Andrew D., 216.
White, Henry, 241, 242, 243, 244, 273.
Whitman, Walt, *T.*'s interview with, and impressions of, 32–36; on *Leaves of Grass*, 34, 35; Italian translation of his verse, 168; *T.*'s estimate of him and his work, 369, 370; mentioned, 359, 409. *See* Perry, Bliss.
Whitney, Mrs., 271.
Wilder, David. *See* Phelps, Abel.
William I, German Emperor, 348.
William II, his 'invitation' to Great Britain in 1898, 315; his 'peace offer,' 316; and the 'Hunnization' of German policy, 317; his pretended democratization of the government, 339; mentioned, generally in uncomplimentary terms, 116, 126, 150, 233, 234, 237, 331, 333, 334, 338, 342, 347, 348, 349.
William, German Crown Prince, 336, 347.
Williams, Bertram, 358.
Williams, Dr., oculist, 251, 252, 254, 256, 283.
Williams, Olive (Swan), 358.
Williams College, *T.* receives degree from, 211, 212, 215.
Wilmer, Dr., the 'king of oculists,' 289.
Wilson, Woodrow, *T.* an early admirer of, 229; attitude of his administration toward Mexico, 230; and Bryan, 230, 231; attitude of toward the War (Jan. 1915), 246; and the *Lusitania*, 249; compared to Buchanan, 269; his 'long tolerance of German bullying,' 276; his 'notes' characterized, 278, 279; his veracity and courage questioned, 286; his campaign slogan (1916), 286; breaks off relations with Germany, 290; his war message, 295; his policy commented on, 295; his obstinacy approved, 307; his statement of war claims, 316; and public opinion, 328; the 'great Epistolary Prodigy,' 341, 345; forced into the War by Roosevelt, 357; 'causes the Senate to vote against the Treaty

and the League of Nations,' 381; and the election of 1920, 397, 398; and Lodge, 399; mentioned (the following references are, in the main, severely critical), 263, 293, 294, 300, 309, 311, 331, 333, 337, 338, 342, 343, 349, 369, 374, 386, 387, 390, 396.
Wipers Times, the, 315, 316.
Wister, Owen, quoted, on *T.* at St. Paul's school, 6, 7; his life of U. S. Grant, 113, 114; his career, 113, 114.
Wood, Leonard, snubbing of, 309.
Wordsworth, William, 200.
World War, the, reaction of, on *T.*, 228, 232, 233 ff., 268; attitude of Americans toward, 232, 237; effect of, on old prejudices, etc., 310, 311; *T.*'s ideas as to end of, 323, 327, 331; the Armistice, 346, 347.
World's Work, The, founded by Page, 98; *T.*'s opinion of, 99, 100, 103; the 'Uplift Number' of, 103; under Arthur Page, 318.
Writing, *T.* on the joy of, 138.

Yale University, severe criticism of, in the *Graduates' Magazine*, 142–44, 147.
Yeats, William B., 186.

Zola, Emile, and the Dreyfus Affair, 205.

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